

Sermon 11: "Your in the Ministry Now"

Scripture: [Nehemiah 10:1-39](#)

Theme: *All of God's people should be ministry oriented*

Last week we dealt with chapter 10 of Nehemiah. That chapter talked about how the people of Jerusalem were able to pursue apply God's Truth. We saw that in a variety of different ways:

- **Personal application of God's truth must begin with the leadership** (9:38-10:27).
- **Personal application of God's truth begins with personal holiness based on understanding** (10:28-29).
- **Personal application of God's truth must extend to the home, work, and Church commitments** (10:30-39).

This week we will be looking more into what chapters 11 and 12 teach have to say. We will be looking specifically at what it means for us as the Church to be ministry oriented in all that we do, which includes serving the church.

MINISTRY INVOLVES SERVING IN THE SPHERE IN WHICH GOD CALLS YOU TO LIVE & SERVE, PRIMARILY TO PEOPLE FIRST AND PROGRAMS SECOND.

We have yet another fifty-eight¹ verses of names. However, if we are quick to read over the first three verse of chapter 11, we can miss the follow fifty-eight verses completely. It is in these opening verses, that we are able to gather why God is yet again listing off names in His Word.

We see right away that the leaders of the people lived within the city that they there ministering to, Jerusalem. One author had this to say about the first verse:

"And if it were an instance of eminent affection to the house of God, zeal for the public good, and of faith, and holy courage, and self-denial, to dwell there at this time, the rulers would be examples of these to their inferiors. Their dwelling there would invite and encourage others to dwell there too²."

By reading the above quote, one would be able to understand why this would be important during this time. As I sit in this, I wonder why would they be encouraging people to come back into the city? I can

¹ [Nehemiah 11:4-12:26](#)

² Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ne 11:1–19). Peabody: Hendrickson.

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understand why the leaders would be there, but why are they trying to encourage people to come back into Jerusalem? Matthew Henry continues, “*When great men choose the holy city for their habitation their example brings holiness into reputation, and their zeal will provoke very many*”³

Where God has placed us geographically matters to Him, for where we live becomes our ministry ground. God has a heart for us to be a *city on a hill*⁴, set apart to bring him glory wherever he calls us. Jesus also gives us the Great Commandment⁵ where he also calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves⁶. These two statements are to be held together in union with one another. While they come from different sections of the book of Matthew, they compliment one another well. In order to be a city on a hill that is salt and light in His Kingdom, we are to live out the Great Commandment in which we pray to fill the Great Commission⁷.

As we continue reading the list of names, we notice things like verse 16, “...and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who were **over the outside work** of the house of God....”. These men were likely in charge of the secular happenings outside of the temple. We also see in these verses things like verse 17, “...and Mattaniah the son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who was the **leader of the praise, who gave thanks**...” This man probably had a good ear and a great voice. This man was responsible for leading the people in psalm. As we continue to examine the rest of these verses, what comes to your mind? What stands out to you about this section?

These verses point something special and unique about the people in them. These people loved other people, a lot. They had such a desire to serve people and the Temple and the people in the surrounding towns. They were people who did not just commit to bringing firewood once a month for the sacrifices that would take place. No, these were people that we passionate about connecting people with their God, the One True God. This group of people gives us a glimpse at what the Spirit does to the Church in [Acts 2:42-47](#) that we often fantasize about.

The theme for this week should also frame how we look at these questions [*All of God's people should be ministry oriented*]. How are you doing with Jesus' command to love your neighbor (literally, the people who live next to you) as yourself? When we encounter people, are we sensitive to what the Spirit is stirring in us. In our work places, are we committed to being salt in light in our work place so that we can give an account to why we as Christians are different? Are you any different? How can we as a Missional community, friends, family, and church support you in your ministries.

³ Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ne 11:1–19). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁴ [Matthew 5:14](#)

⁵ [Matthew 22:34-40](#)

⁶ Matthew 22:39

⁷ [Matthew 28:19-20](#)

I will even take this one step closer to home. How are you doing, husbands, at loving your wife in the Ephesians 5 way, since this is to be your first ministry. Husbands, do your wives know how much you love them? Do they feel loved and cared for you in the same way the Church of Jesus Christ is cared for and loved by Jesus? The same goes for wives, how are you doing at submitting to your husband as to the Lord? Parents, how are you doing in your ministry of being a mother/father? Again, what are ways that we as a Missional Community, friends, families, and church help you in your most important ministry, the home?

WHAT ARE SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR MINISTRY?

As we continue to work through a long list of names, with pieces of narrative woven in between them, the text can be difficult to navigate. I hope to outline remaining verses in this summary by James Montgomery Boice:

“The narrative tells how Nehemiah brought the Levites, musicians, and singers in from the outlying regions of the country, took the people up on the wall, and staged a great procession or parade. It had two parts. One part was led by Nehemiah and proceeded in one direction around the wall while the other part was led by Ezra and proceeded in the other direction around the wall. Each group was led by musicians and choirs that sang praises to God and gave thanks to him. Then, after the circumference of the wall had been navigated in this manner, the people converged at the temple, offered sacrifices, and rejoiced so loudly that “the sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away”⁸”

A servant (minister) needs a pure & worshipful heart (12:27-43).

As we examine these next verses, we need to be careful not to get lost in exactly what happened and try to directly apply that to our Christian worship. Rather, we need to look at the spirit in which they did things in order to grasp why they celebrated in the way they did.

Obviously they sang songs, but what exactly did they sing? There are lots of different options, but we can be almost certain that they were Psalms. Perhaps even Psalm 48⁹, which outlines that these people were celebrating. Singing has been a tool that Christians in particular have used throughout the ages to communicate with the One True God. Charles Swindall writes, *“Singing has always been a striking feature of the worship of God’s Old Testament and New Testament people. This is not true of other religions. Many use repetitive chants. In some, clergy sing. But generally the religions of the world are grim things. It is only in biblical religion that the people of God*

⁸ Boice, J. M. (2005). *Nehemiah : An expositional commentary* (125). Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerBooks.

⁹ Psalm 48:12-14

are characteristically joyful and express their joy in great singing¹⁰”.

Is this a natural reaction for you? As you read Scripture or pray, are you lead into a doxology or a heart of worship? As you serve the Lord, do you have songs of praise running through your heart and head? While I do not intend for us to sound like a bunch of hippie Christians, I do wonder what it would look like for us to have this kind of heart. After all, Jesus did die as the propitiation of our sins¹¹, in which He took on the wrath of God so that we would no longer be objects of wrath, but children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As people who believe this, how can this not lead us to worship, everyday? Who are we then to not sing loudly to the one who enables us to have life and sing?

A servant needs a joyful & giving heart (12:43-47).

As we begin to read the final verses of chapter 12, we notice the theme of joy. This theme comes in words like joy, joyful or rejoicing. However, as I read this section, I could not help but think of Pau's words to the church of Philippi when he told them to rejoice. Most of us have probably heard this verse a few times in our lives, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”*¹² J. G. McConville says:

“If the joy of Nehemiah’s Jerusalem seems alien and Paul’s unnatural, it is simply a measure of the difficulty experienced by a rich western world in finding well-being in godliness itself. What Nehemiah and Paul knew—in direct contrast to the modern doctrine that he who acquires most and succeeds best is happiest—is that joy, like love, peace, self-control, etc. (cf. Gal. 5:22), is spiritual.”^{6,13}

It seems as though the joy that is being experienced at this time is a spirit of joy. However, we see the same time of joy in the New Testament. It seems as though, even in the Old Testament, God is filling his people with joyful hearts because of what He has done in Israel's lives. We still get to experience a similar joy on this side of the cross, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

I wonder if the joy the people were experiencing in Jerusalem at this time is similar to what Paul was talking about in Philippians 2 where he says, *“...complete my joy be being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”*¹⁴ While we have two different texts on each side of the cross, if we believe that God is the same yesterday, today, as he will be tomorrow, we can

¹⁰ Boice, J. M. (2005). *Nehemiah : An expositional commentary* (130). Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerBooks.

¹¹ Romans 3:25

¹² Philippians 4:4

⁶ McConville, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 142–43.

¹³ Boice, J. M. (2005). *Nehemiah : An expositional commentary* (131–132). Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerBooks.

¹⁴ Philippians 2:2

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infer that during this time, Nehemiah and the rest of his people are having a sweet time of worship. This is largely due to the fact of what God has done, however over the last few chapters, Nehemiah and Ezra have been finishing the work in Jerusalem to bring people to a place where they can worship God for who he is and what he is has done. God has brought His people together, to sing to him together, to be joyful together, and to giving their all to Him, together.

Have you been finding joy lately? If we do not have joy, are we missing out on fully living within the Spirit? What brings you your greatest source of joy, honestly? Don't try to think theologically about this one. We all know that it should be Jesus, but for some (most) of us he is not. So what is then bringing us a false joy? Do you understand that this is idolatry? Do you understand that you need to repent of this and turn to the one who has saved you from that idol?

As we close these two chapters, I want you think about this question, which is based off the theme for this week. **In all that you do, at home, work, AND church, are you ministry oriented? Out of your deep deep love for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, do you have a desire to be ministry oriented for the sake of His Church and ultimately for the Glory of God and the joy of all people?**

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. To what extent (if any) do our desires enter into the question of where God wants us to live? How can we know His will in this decision?
2. How can a Christian determine what His spiritual gifts are?
3. To what extent does a naturally shy person need to overcome this trait in order to minister effectively to people?
4. To what extent does a believer need to "have it all together" before he/she gets involved in ministry?