“Blooming Flowers on the Wall!”

Nehemiah 11

Intro. – In 1884, a young man died and his grieving parents wanted to do something in his honor. They met with Charles Eliot who at that time was President of Harvard University. The appointment was to share with him their desire to do something in the memory of their son. Charles Eliot looked at this common couple and concluded they didn’t have much means; so, he said to the couple, “Perhaps you would like to set up a scholarship?” They responded, “Mr. Eliot, we were thinking of something a little more substantial, like maybe a building.” Eliot quickly dismissed that idea saying, “Buildings are way too costly…” Eliot then ushered this couple out of his office thinking they didn’t have a clue as to what they wanted. The following year, Charles Eliot learned this same couple had taken their 26 million dollars back West and started a little school called the Leland Stanford Jr. University. Today we know it simply as Stanford University.

Let me use this to intro. the idea of “wall flowers” – people in life who are behind the scenes, who don’t call attention to themselves and who frankly are not comfortable with attention. You see such people make some of the largest contributions. We wouldn’t have the some bodies if we didn’t have the nobodies. It’s so easy to forget these people but it is impossible to do anything significant without them. Case in point, there would not have been a wall in Jerusalem had there not been the blooming flowers on the wall.

Purpose: to learn to honor those who bloom in obscurity

Nehemiah’s desire was to restore Jerusalem back to being the city of God. This meant getting people to move back into the city. 7:5 “Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled…” God put into Nehemiah’s heart a plan to bring people back to Jerusalem. Chapter 11 gives us the plan God had put into the heart of Nehemiah:

I The Strategy Revealed (11:1-2)

A. The Leaders Set the Example
   1. Seen throughout Nehemiah, as well as, the rest of Scripture – leaders MUST always set example!
   2. These leaders moved back to Jerusalem setting the example before asking the people to do it – (note: people will never go where they are not led… leaders must always lead by example!)

B. One Out of Ten Chosen
   1. Essentially this was the first recorded “draft” – one out of every ten people chosen to move…
   2. May not sound real democratic to us, but to the Jew it was the hand of God leading the way…

C. Many Who Volunteered
   1. More implied here than patriotism – Hebrew word used means “to impel or insight from within.”
   2. These people were “moved” deep down inside = motivated for God!
   3. Thus, rebuilding of the wall pointless were it not for the relocating of these blooming wall flowers.
   4. Other Old Testament examples of the word volunteer
      a. Exodus 35:21 “And everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the Lord’s contribution for the work of the tent meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.”
      b. Judges 5:2 “That the leaders led in Israel; that the people volunteered. Bless the Lord!” i.e. what a thrill when God’s leaders take their places and God’s people willingly follow to do God’s bidding!
      c. 1 Chronicles 29:9 “Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.” – Nothing is more encouraging than to witness willing/enthused people putting their hands to the plow...
   5. Illus. – 1964 war fought in Indonesia. The Napoleze fighting to win independence. A tribe called the Gurkhas. Asked if they would be willing to fly behind enemy lines, jump out of airplanes… They met and discussed their decision. They came back saying, “We’ll do that, but you must fly 100 feet above the ground over swampy areas.” The Gurkhas were told, “Such altitude would not give your parachutes time to open.” They responded, “Parachutes? What are parachutes?” = Illus. willingness go at great cost & where most not willing to go!
   6. This is the spirit that pleases God! The Scriptures are full of nameless, obscure people who were compelled from within to offer themselves to God’s service!
II The People Behind the Strategy (11:2b-36)

A. Those Who Willingly Moved (11:2b)
1. You may not think this is such a big deal, but anyone who has moved knows what this entails…
2. These people left their houses, jobs, friends etc. to move to a city that was a pile of rubble, governed by men they had not appointed… and policed by men they didn’t know…
3. Why? What motivated them to take such action?
   a. they knew it to be the will of God. God always cares where is His people live…
   b. they understood they were being called upon for a significant task… people desire to be a part of something that will have lasting influence then and on into the future…

B. Those Who Worked the Temple (11:12,16)
1. 822 men who carried on the work inside the temple – Nehemiah understood the significance in restoring a strong spiritual base…
   a. in order to thrive, a community must have a higher allegiance which holds it together…
   b. if Jerusalem going to be restored, Nehemiah knew a spiritual foundation must be restored!
2. These 822 men were entrusted with the purpose of the temple = spiritual foundation of Israel…; yet, these 822 were hardly even known by anybody!
3. The outside work of the temple was handled by the Levites – care for animals being sacrificed… changing of the money… coordinated the service time for each Levite to serve… care for storehouses of grain and food allotments for the priests… etc. etc. etc.
   a. like today there is a reason you are comfortable, hear well, bulletin, literature, planned worship time. Why? Because there are people who work within and without coordinating…
   b. God be thanked for all those who helped in making this gathering possible today!
4. That’s the way it is in the work of the Lord’s Church
   a. most missionaries are unknown even by the churches that support them…
   b. most Bible School workers are seldom written about in any publication’s Whose Who” list
5. In heaven we’ll learn the names of servants whom we probably aren’t aware of their contribution(s) to the Lord’s work == “The last shall be first and the first shall be last”

C. Those Who Kept the People Praying (11:17)
1. Not told much about Mattaniah, but told enough to know this man was a prayer warrior…
2. You ever known a “prayer warrior?” I mean a person who behind the scenes may be limited in helping in other areas, but take it upon themselves to pray…
3. Illus. – true story of preacher in London who went to call on a servant girl who was prevented from attending a worship assembly because her employers seldom let her off on Sundays. Mary was her name. So this preacher asked on this call, “Mary, are you frustrated not being able to do much for the Lord?” Mary replied, “No, because I do get the newspaper every day.” Confused, the preacher responded, “What do you mean?” She replied, “At the end of the day before going to bed, I open the paper to the section that has all the births, marriages and deaths listed. First, I pray for all the babies born that they will learn of Christ and find Him early in their life. Then I pray by name for all the people who got married that they’ll put the Lord first in their marriages and resolve to remain married to each other. Then I pray for every family who lost a loved one that they’ll turn to the only true Source Who can comfort them.” It was then the preacher realized, Mary was doing more in the church than anyone else.

D. Those Who Led in Music Ministry (11:22)
1. Uzzi was responsible for the singers of the corporate worship in the house of God – came from a family of musicians who went all the way back to Asaph (music minister days of David/Solomon) – point being music ministry ran in this family.
2. We learn in study of Bible the ministry of music was significant in the worship of God:
   a. David saw to it that 288 men would be trained and skilled in music for the Lord.
   b. couldn’t come near the Temple and not be lifted by the music being used there
3. Music quickens the heart to receive the Word and prompts the will to submit to the Spirit of God. 
   - commend those who take seriously the worship time we share and who work to bring us all into the presence of God each Sunday, not by fault but by intention!
4. **Illus.** – Irvin Berlin, great American composer (White Christmas, Easter Parade etc.) was interviewed and was asked, “Is there a question you wanted to be asked but to this point haven’t?” “Yes, I have never been asked about all those songs that weren’t hits. I tell you, I still think they’re wonderful.”

Let me suggest there will always be those in the Lord’s work with more *visibility* than others… But I want you to know God thinks all His servants are wonderful. Not just the best known ones.

**Conclusion:** How can we apply these principles to our situation?

1. **Ask God for Direction and not Just Provision:**
   - God wants to bless every effort made on His behalf – He wants to “open doors” to those who are not just willing but desirous of going through these doors…
   - remember a few weeks back asked church family to be praying the Lord would tenderize the heart of the individual who owns the land behind us…
   - we need to always ask God for direction AND provision…

2. **Need to be Involved in Ministry and Not Just Activity:**
   - difference between activity and ministry. God calls each of us to not *attend* functions but *to function*!
   - God has equipped every believer to be a difference maker. Each of us are to play a role in building up the wall right here… this is what ministry is about and wherein ministries come!
   - attendance and activities can be good… but God wants us to be involved far more than activities!

3. **Need to Care More About Service and Not Just Notice**
   - the most obscure task is important if done willingly for God’s glory. God doesn’t check the applause meter. He checks the heart meter…
   - if you’re a wall flower, one of those behind the scenes people using your gifts to build up the wall for God right here, be assured God knows what you’re all about and He cares!
   - Hebrews 6:10 “*For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*”
   - Brethren and friend, there is absolutely nothing wrong with being “Blooming Flowers on the Wall!”