

WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5
*“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”*

August 14th, 2022

...We Gather to Worship God...

Intro: Good morning to each one here this morning. My name is Pastor Ken Leffler, and I am very pleased to be with you today. May I say that you have a beautiful church building, one of the most prestigious I have ever been in. My wife came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ at St. Paul's church many years ago. A man they called the flying clergyman by the name of Walter Welsh was doing a series of messages on taking a risk on Christ. She did and we have never looked back. (Further story for another time).

Call to Worship

Those who Love Jesus listen to His call. When He calls they know the sound of His voice. When they listen and recognize who is calling they run to Him. The story is told that during World War 1 some Turkish soldiers tried to steal a flock of sheep from a hillside near Jerusalem. The shepherd who had been sleeping awakened to see his sheep being driven off on the other side of the ravine. He could not hope to get his sheep back on his own, but suddenly had an idea. He put his hands to his mouth and gave his own peculiar call. The sheep heard the call and for a minute stopped and listened. Then hearing the call again and recognizing it was their Shepherd who was calling turned around and bounded down one side of the valley and up and over the other side to their shepherd. The thieves could do nothing, and all because the sheep knew the masters voice. **John 10:27:** My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us in praise and in prayer. The ministers are on holidays until the end of the month.

Birthday Train: We celebrate two birthdays this week: Monday August 15 - Les Dool and Saturday, August 20 - Mae Filipowicz. Happy Birthday to Les and Mae, may Christ bless your day with joy and delight and much love.

Offerings and Tithes: Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca.

Opening Prayer

...We Listen to God's Word...

Old Testament: Nehemiah 2:1-10

Hymn: Simply trusting every day - 689

Message - Have a Faith like Nehemiah: This message is about faith not only of an individual, but the faith of a people.

II Chronicles 36:20-23 (NIV): *“He (Nebuchadnezzar) carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.””*

So what happened was the first phase of God's plan. There were many who went back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel. They were being harassed day and night. When Ezra the scribe/rabbi found out about this, Cyrus the King gave permission for Ezra to go back and straighten things out and get the temple built.

Well shortly after that Nehemiah also heard about the goings on in Jerusalem and it was causing him great concern. That is a brief overview on that period of history. God allowed Jerusalem to be conquered for 70 years.

So now we come to this fellow called Nehemiah. Our text is from Nehemiah 2:1-10. When talking about faith, Mary Gardner Brainard says this,

*“I would rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the light.
I would rather walk with Him by faith than walk alone by sight.”*

Where is your faith leading you with all that we as a nation are facing. Without Faith, what do we have? Oswald Chambers says this “Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading.” repeat.

In many ways what I just described is a fairly accurate description of what the Christian life is like. We might be in the midst of horrible circumstances RIGHT NOW and yet we have something to hold on to...something that we may not be able to SEE yet, but, know that God gives us confidence BY FAITH that it's just a matter of time! I have a favourite saying and it goes something like this, "For this we have Jesus".

So when I think of faith, I think of Nehemiah, a man of deep faith and believe in God. So let us look at verse one of chapter two in Nehemiah. Faith may require PATIENCE- (v.1) "In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes..." (Nehemiah 2:1a)

Nehemiah has been in PRAYER and periods of FASTING before the Lord for 4 months concerning the plight of his people in Jerusalem. Remember Ezra the prophet went ahead of Nehemiah to rebuild the temple. Nehemiah hears that the rebuilding of the temple and other items that should be proceeding are not, and he is somewhat upset.

Let there be NO DOUBT that when God's people sense that something needs to be done...a heart needs to be changed...a church needs to be revived...a nation needs to be turned- God calls upon His people to PRAY and to Persist in prayer!

You know what, Faith demands responsible SERVICE- (v.1-2) listen to what Nehemiah is saying. "When wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?'"

As the king's "cup bearer", Nehemiah was responsible to see that the food and drink given to the king was safe. He would personally make sure that neither was poisoned and, in this role, was TRUSTED by the king and Nehemiah showing up every day was vital...for the king likely preferred to eat every day!!

I think it's important to point out that WAITING for God to answer his prayers didn't keep Nehemiah from doing his job.-Was he somewhat distracted? Probably!-Might he have feelings of depression? Maybe!-Was he weary and worn out from his prayer and fasting?

Definitely (according to the text) ****BUT HE STILL SHOWED UP AND DID HIS JOB...**in fact, this is the first time his internal struggle really showed in his outward appearance: "I had not been sad in the king's presence before." he says.

Some might question: "Is this right? Isn't it like 'denial' or something for Nehemiah to act like everything's OK? He should have been sad earlier...let King Artaxerxes know he was not in a good frame of mind

I personally disagree...I think sometimes we fall into the "trap" of settling for human sympathy and miss out on God's solution. We walk around and put our BURDENS on public display...and we LOOK MISERABLE, and people FEEL SORRY for us...and that's good enough.

Jesus talked about this misguided trade-off: Matthew 6:16-18: “When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

****WHILE WE WAIT FOR GOD’S ANSWER...until orders change...CONTINUE TO SERVE!**

Faith may require **TAKING RISKS-** (v.1-3) “I had not been sad in the king’s presence before; so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

****Rule #1 about serving a king... Do not be down cast in his presence.**

Do NOT bring the king down with your problems To enter the presence of the king SAD or to talk about your problems was extremely risky. A king wanted to be served and be made happy and Nehemiah was literally taking his CAREER if not HIS LIFE in his hands.

Actually...the point was about being AUTHENTIC before God. Nehemiah is not seeking the sympathy of King Artaxerxes...he is before the one HUMAN who can help his cause and today the burden God has placed upon his heart is too heavy to deny. This is an “ALL or NOTHING” day...not a pity-party.

Faith and PRAYER are inseparable- (v. 4) “The king said to me, “What is it you want?” Then I prayed to the God of heaven.” This is a powerful example...and more evidence of the kind of man Nehemiah is. He has BEEN praying for 4 months. He is weary and worn by his prayer and fasting...and NOW, in this “all or nothing” moment...he pauses in his heart...to pray again.

Think for a minute on how direct the prayer that Nehemiah has been praying: Chapter 1, v. 11: “Give your servant success TODAY by granting him favour in the presence of this man.”

It is COMPLETELY fair to assume that Nehemiah’s DAILY prayer was, “God, give me success today...God, give me favour with the king today...” But that he WAITED until...the RIGHT MOMENT...and here it is!

But he stops and just asks, “Lord, is this it? Is this the moment I’ve been praying for? I’ve been praying that you would grant me favour and I need the courage to step out now!” ****I found a quote that I just LOVED about this important moment in Nehemiah’s life: “Success comes when**

a thousand hours of preparation meets one moment of opportunity.” Here’s Nehemiah’s one moment of opportunity.

Faith and planning are not ENEMIES- (v.5-9) “I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.

” Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. I also said to him, ‘If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?

And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.”

Please do not think that “faith” means always “flying by the seat of your pants”.Faith and Planning...Prayer and Planning DO co-exist.

The KEY to their relationship is found in Verse 8: “because the gracious hand of God was upon me, the king granted my requests.”

Psalm 127:1 says: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” It was important that Nehemiah PRAY because the heart of the king had been against the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

But it was important that Nehemiah PLAN because when the king asked what he needed, Nehemiah’s answer was critical...I need this much time...and I need letters so I can get there safely...and I need permission to obtain building materials.

THEN GOD ADDS THE BONUS: He moved in Artaxerxes’ heart to do even more and he sent Nehemiah with officers and soldiers to protect Nehemiah along the way!

Faith may bring opposition- (v.10) “When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.” Simply: God’s leading and blessing DOES NOT necessarily mean no trials/opposition.

CONCLUSION: In times like this we need a Saviour, we need security, we need the scriptures.

Yes, we do live in perilous times. Nehemiah needed faith and God gave him faith, was he worried, I would think so. He went before his King trusting in God to answer and He did. So In times like

these you need a Savior. As we walk thru life, we need to walk with the knowledge that God is walking with us.

So many have put their trust in things of this world to only find no answers. As we close, as you walk this life. Walk it by faith.

In times like these you need SECURITY, Jesus is your security. In times of trouble and trial and turmoil, go to Jesus, your anchor in a turbulent world. In times like these you need the SCRIPTURES. Listen to this poem.

Though the cover is worn, And the pages are torn, And though places bear traces of tears, Yet more precious than gold is the Book worn and old, That can shatter and scatter my fears. When I prayerfully look. In the precious old Book, as my eyes scan the pages, I see. many tokens of love from the Father above Who is nearest and dearest to me. This old Book is my guide, Tis a friend by my side, It will lighten and brighten my way; And each promise I find, Soothes and gladdens my mind.

As I read it and heed it today. In times like these, as never before, let's read and heed the Bible! Get into God's Word and spend time in prayer with the Savior.

One last thing, in times like these you need SERVICE. Yes, the world needs your service and yes, the church needs your service. But most important—YOU need to serve. It's in service for God to others that we grow and know the joy of being used by God. It's in serving others. that we become the hands and feet of Jesus.

This pandemic and so much that has happened over the last few years has led to unprecedented isolation and loneliness and depression and suffering. What an opportunity to be a blessing to those who need to find hope in the Savior and by being a friend to those who are lonely, and by encouraging the downhearted and by pointing people to Jesus and His Word. God help us to step up to our calling and serve God and others.

Like Nehemiah, he stepped up and stepped out, may we do the same and much more. **Nehemiah 12:26-28 (NIV):** *“They served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe. At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, They were faithful. may we be so as the”*.

Hymn: Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine - 687

Benediction: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen

Prayers - Wednesday August 10, 2022

Romans 12:12 says... "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer".

Birthdays

Ember Deubel – whose birthday is August 10! May the Lord bless Ember and keep her safe and growing in Him!!

Praise

Lord we praise you for your promise of answered prayers. Even when we do not see we know you are at work and we are grateful; thank you for your faithfulness to us Lord.

We praise you Lord for Susan's friend's husband who is being treated for lung cancer and he is so far, not having any side affects. We continue to lift him up before you for a good response to the treatment in extending his life.

Prayers

Lord we lift up our ministers Revs. John and Charlene to you as they take vacation and study leave for the month of August. Bless them, keep them safe and well in their travels. Lord, touch them with renewal and refreshing of the Holy Spirit that will give them rest and a new energy and vision of their service to you. Bless them Lord, we ask in Jesus Name, Amen.

We pray for Ursula Hagen who is in hospital. May she know your presence every day and may the family know that you are with them as well.

We continue to pray for Josie who is still in the hospital from a series of issues. Lord, be with her family and give them and Josie's care team wisdom in what are the next steps.

We lift up a young man struggling with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Lord please speak to his heart and mind; we ask that you would heal him and give him insight to know he is loved by you. We pray that he is able to hear Your Spirit speaking truth to him. We also pray for others that we know who are struggling with mental health issues. We bring these names to you and pray that they would seek out help.

Lord, we pray for those who are dealing with cancer.

We pray for Charlotte who as diagnosed with multiple cancers last year and is now on a maintenance program. We pray for the family who are finding the trip to London each month to be

somewhat difficult. Give them strength and courage. We pray for Your on going watch care and encouragement for Charlotte and her family.

We pray for Grayson who will be finishing his treatment this fall. We pray that he is able to keep on track this summer so that he is able to meet this goal in the fall.

We continue to pray for Peter's sister-in-law who is still battling cancer. Be with her and be with Peter and his family as they try to support her.

Lord, we pray for those who are facing a variety of other medical issues.

We pray for Beth's friend's son who was in a very bad accident. Lord, we thank you that he is alive and we pray for your continued healing of his multiple injuries.

We pray for Joan Van Bentham who broke her leg. May she heal quickly.

We pray for Jody Arthurs who broke her leg in a bike accident. Be with her as she waits for the break to heal and recovers from this injury.

We pray for Charity that you will heal the wound that she has from her back surgery. Lord, please put your healing hand on her and may she know that you are with her during this time of healing and restoration.

We pray for Les Dool and that he would get relief from the shingles that he had in his neck. Do not let him get discouraged, Lord. Assure him that healing will come.

We pray for Jackie and his ongoing health issues. He is doing a little better and really appreciates these prayers for him.

We pray for Noella's son, Guy Thibodeau, who had a massive heart attack. Be with him in his recovery. Give him strength.

Other Prayers

We pray for Carol and her son, Adam, that their relationship would improve so that they could enjoy each others company again.

We pray for Gene and Leona as they look for an apartment. Help them to find something that will meet their needs.

We pray for Nicole and her 9 year old daughter Hope who face the loss of Bryan who was their husband and father. It will be a difficult summer. Be with them, Lord.

Lastly, Lord, we pray for the churches of St. Paul's and Victoria as they face changes again. May they put their trust in you and experience your presence with them at this time.