

**Nehemiah 12:27-36, 38, 43****Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem**

<sup>27</sup> At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres.

<sup>28</sup> The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites,

<sup>29</sup> from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem.

<sup>30</sup> When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

<sup>31</sup> I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.

<sup>32</sup> Hoshaiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them,

<sup>33</sup> along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

<sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,

<sup>35</sup> as well as some priests with trumpets, and also Zechariah son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zakkur, the son of Asaph,

<sup>36</sup> and his associates—Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah and Hanani—with musical instruments prescribed by David the man of God. Ezra the teacher of the Law led the procession.

<sup>38</sup> The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of<sup>[a]</sup> the wall, together with half the people—past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall,

<sup>43</sup> And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. It is good for us to be in the Lord's house this morning. Why is it good you ask? Well, it is good for us to dwell together in unity. It is good to part of the cloud of witnesses to the baptism of an entire family. It is good to stop by that place where God has promised to meet us and just be in His presence for a little while.

- If you feel good because God allowed you to get up this morning, say so.
- If you feel good because a family has decided to bury their old self and put on a new self in baptism, say so.
- If you feel good because you can feel the Spirit of the Lord moving in this place, say so.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!

This morning we continue with our sermon series on the return of the Children of Israel to the Promised Land. This series of sermons spreads a period of about 70 years, from the first return to the dedication of the temple walls. We have considered Ezra and now we are in Nehemiah. I pray you have been reading and praying this week, for I believe that there is a message here for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Would you pray with me and for me as I ask the question?

### **ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME TO BE RESTORED?**

On Friday and Saturday I attended and participated in the officers retreat of the ABCMC. I want you to hear that I attended and participated because those are two different things. Some of us come to church every week - we attend. But just being present does not mean you participated. See if you just attend you can come to church with heavy, dirty baggage (negative attitude, revengeful spirits, physically present, but mentally absent) and leave with heavy, dirty baggage. But if you participate: pray, sing, lift up holy hands, commit an act of random kindness, praise and worship God, read scripture there is a chance that you can exchange your dirty, heavy baggage (negative attitude,

revengeful spirits, physically present, but mentally absent) for some peace and some joy and some thanksgiving. You might even be able to say:

- I have got peace like a river
- This joy I have the world didn't give it to me
  - and the world can't take it away
- I won't complaint

The point is that Sunday morning ought to be the time you set aside to **get restored.**

### **ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME TO BE RESTORED?**

In my mother's house there was a gate legged table. It had several leaves and from Thanksgiving to New Years it was at it's full length. If that table could talk it would tell tales of homework, family meetings, Sunday and Holiday Dinners and games of hide and seek. Martha Ann bought it 2<sup>nd</sup> hand in 1940 and it was still going strong in 1985 when her granddaughter, my oldest niece, decided it needed to be restored. Roxanne was a skillful decorator and had a great eye for detail. But she was met with great skepticism by her three aunts when she said she was going to strip, sand, and refinish that gate leg table and restore it to its former beauty. After a bit of debate and deciding she needed to do this as a gift to grandmother and as a gift to herself we agreed. Several days was spent in the prep work outside in the garage. Then several more days spent with the stain, the sealer and the varnish. The finish product was wonderful and that table is still being used in my sister's home, the last family home my mother, Martha Ann lived in. The table had been restored.

### **ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME TO BE RESTORED?**

At our retreat this weekend we talked about and prayed for churches within our region that are dying. I was fascinated and saddened as I listened to the reason given for why they were dying.

- lack of musician

- lack of paid soloists and section leaders
- lack of youth and young families
- lack of interest in Christian Education
- lack of involvement with the community
- a pastor who did not visit/call the sick
- a pastor who did not spend time with the people
- a pastor who was out of touch

After listening we prayed and one by one we asked God to show them what He would have them to do. We asked God to bind them together. We asked God to make them acceptable to Him. We asked God to restore these churches.

So what does a dying church, an old gate legged table and participation vs.. attendance have to do with the lesson in front of us today.

1. If we fail to move from attendance to participation we too can become a dying church
2. If however, we are willing to put in the time needed to strip away some of our bad habits, sand off some of evil thoughts, refinish our outside with a new coat of stain, seal it with clear varnish so everyone can see our glow we will not be a dying church but rather a church that the Lord will send His Son to bring to Him.
3. Again if we fail to figure out how to give the gate legged table a new look, a new place, a new purpose it will not matter how good it looks, someone will come along and declare it dead outdated and put it on the curb.

If we are to be the church of tomorrow, a church meeting the needs of the next generation, we have got to start today.

### **ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME TO BE RESTORED?**

Restoration occurs to different objects in different ways. A door can be removed from the hinges and worked on with power tools. A table

with intricate detail may require some handwork. A car will require different skills for the engine than the seats. As we see each object being different, each person is also different.

I don't know what needs to be restored in your life. So I will just tell you about mine.

**I need an attitude adjustment**

let go of some stuff  
forgive myself about some stuff  
decide some stuff just is not worth the time

**I need a time with Jesus adjustment**

quiet time  
longer prayer time  
sermon prep time

**I need a patience adjustment**

patience with God's people  
patience with my family  
patience with my own failures and shortcomings

Our lessons for the past two months have reminded us there are consequences for failing to stay connected and getting restored when it is time.

We can lose what God has prepared for us

We can find ourselves in slavery

We can have a generation of children who do not know God

**ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT IN THE TIME TO BE RESTORED?**