

**“Liberty and Justice for All”**

Nehemiah 5:1-13; Luke 19:1-10

**INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS *INSIDE* THE WALL**

1. Nehemiah is primarily concerned with rebuilding God’s people, not rebuilding the wall.
2. Chapter 4 ends with picture of cooperation & working together to protect.
  - Chapter 5 opens with a great outcry within the Jewish community – threatening their unity.

**THE SITUATION: FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION. v.1-5**

1. A great outcry arose from the people and their wives. v.1
    - This is not complaining, whining, ‘making waves’ because something is not going the way they wanted, etc.
  2. People were in financial ‘slavery.’ v.2-5
    - Subsistence living—some barely had enough food to live. v.2
    - Usury—others had to mortgage their property to get enough food. v.3
    - Taxes—others had to borrow money to pay taxes. v.4
    - Generational debt—the burden put on future generations. v.5
- They were powerless to do anything about it. v.5b

**NEHEMIAH’S LEADERSHIP. v.6-11**

1. Nehemiah heard their complaint. v.6
  - He became angry. He did not ignore the outcry—but responded.
2. Nehemiah ‘took counsel’ then addressed the problem. v.7
  - He reflected. He considered. He undoubtedly prayed.
  - He addressed the people involved.
  - He clearly articulated the problem: “You are exacting interest, each from his brother.”
3. Why it was wrong.
  - It was the ‘ruling class’ – those in power – who were abusing others. v.7: “the nobles and the officials”
  - It went against God’s Word. Exod. 22:25; Leviticus 25; Deut. 23:19

Leviticus 25:35-41: “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. <sup>36</sup> Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. <sup>37</sup> You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. <sup>38</sup> I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

<sup>39</sup> “If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: <sup>40</sup> he shall be with you as a hired worker and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. <sup>41</sup> Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers.

- It not only broke the letter of the law, it broke the spirit of the law. v.8
  - It compromised their witness to the nations. v.9
4. Nehemiah called them to repent. v.10-11
    - Take action to correct the wrong: Return both the property taken and the interest charged.
    - Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8: Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

**THEIR RESPONSE. v.12-13**

1. The nobles and officials promised to restore and return. v.12
2. They did as they promised. v.13
  - Nehemiah ‘shook out the fold of his garment’ as a visual sign of keeping promise.

Acts 3:19-20

Luke 19:1-10

## A Few Important Announcements...

- **Stephen and Marion Spencer: Next Sunday morning**, missionaries Stephen and Marion Spencer will be joining us for worship and Stephen will be preaching. We have long supported their ministry in Africa and they are working to start a new Christian university - Genesis University - in South Africa. After the second service, there will be a luncheon for those who would like to hear more and get to know the Spencers.
- **One Service/Church Picnic:** On **Sunday, March 14**, we will have one joint worship service followed by a church picnic. That Sunday is Daylight Savings Time so we will be springing forward our clocks that day. We will have Discipleship Class at 9:45 and Worship at 10:45, with the picnic to follow.
- For both the luncheon with the Spencers next Sunday and the church picnic, please sign up either online or on the Church Center app. Thank you.
- **Vaccine Roundtable Discussion:** Next **Sunday evening (February 28)** we invite you either in-person or via livestream to join us for an important roundtable discussion on moral, ethical and Biblical considerations of the covid vaccines. The objective is not to tell you to get the vaccine or not to get the vaccine. The roundtable discussion will bring together medical and ministry people to have a healthy conversation around a complex matter of importance to all of us. If you have a question you would like us to address during the discussion, text your question to 941.926.4777.
- **Outdoor Simulcast of Worship Services:** Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey regarding interest in a Sunday evening outdoor service. We received a variety of ideas and thoughts. Based on the feedback, here is what we are going to do: **Starting next Sunday (Feb 28), we will have an outdoor area set up to participate live in both services. You can bring your chair and masks will be required.** This will be available during both services. If you have stayed away out of caution, we hope this creates a space where you will feel safe reconnecting with people in the church.
- **Interested in learning more about Covenant Life?** The next **Connections Class** will be Saturday, March 6 from 9:00 am until 12:30 pm (lunch included) at the church building. This class is also required for those interested in membership at Covenant Life. For planning purposes, please let us know you plan to attend by calling the church office at 941.926-4777.