

**“The Perfect Leader”**

Nehemiah 5:14-19; Mark 1:4-11

**CONTEXT FOR NEHEMIAH 5:14-19**

**1. As God’s people rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem they faced opposition from outside enemies.**

**2. Chapter 5 turns the attention to problems within the Jewish community itself.**

- The “nobles and officials” (v.7) were taking advantage of a difficult situation (a famine, v.3).
- The people experienced great hardship because of:
  - 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

**3. Nehemiah brought charges against those who were perpetuating this system of financial slavery. v.7**

→ The nobles and officials listened to Nehemiah and repented. v.12, 13

**NEHEMIAH’S LEADERSHIP**

**1. Nehemiah modeled self-sacrifice. v.14**

- Under Artaxerxes’ rule, the governor had a right to a food allowance financed by taxing the people.
- Nehemiah willingly forfeited his right to collect tax from the people to pay for his food.

**2. Nehemiah had a ‘God-ward’ orientation. v.15**

- Previous governors laid heavy burdens on the people through taxes.
- Nehemiah did not act as previous governors... because of the fear of God.

**3. Nehemiah was personally engaged in the work itself. v.16**

- He and his personal servants (‘household’) were not there to acquire property & land for themselves.
- He joined his fellow Jews in the work itself. Ref. John 13:1-17

**4. Nehemiah was generous and hospitable. v.17-18**

- Nehemiah *served* in his leadership role for the good of the people.
- Nehemiah’s personal household was large—150! (incl. extended family, servants, guests)
- His also provided for official guests, diplomatic visitors/ambassadors from neighboring nations.

**5. Nehemiah’s service was sincere before God. v.19**

- v.19 is Nehemiah’s prayer to God. *Remember..., O my God...*
- Nehemiah is confirming before God Himself that his service is sincere in both action and motive.

→ It is possible to maintain a façade of righteousness before men, but not before God.

**THE PERFECT LEADER JESUS CHRIST. Mark 1:4-11**

- v.4: John administered a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- v.5: People came to John to be baptized in the Jordan River, *confessing* their sins.

→ When people received John’s baptism it was a sign of their repentance, identifying as sinners.

- v.9: Jesus was baptized by John—Jesus received a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

→ Though Jesus never sinned, he humbled himself to receive a baptism of repentance—as our representative.

- Mark is telling us that Jesus is responsible not only for his own obedience, but for ours as well.

Matthew 20:25-28: *But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

## **A few ‘sayings’ or ‘proverbs’ of Gen. George Washington, “Father of His Country” ...**

Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.

Be no flatterer; neither play with any that delights not to be played with.

Let your countenance be pleasant, but in serious matters somewhat grave.

Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another, though he were your enemy.

When you see a crime punished, you may be inwardly pleased, but always show pity to the suffering offender.

Let your discourse with men of business be short and comprehensive.

Use no reproachful language against anyone; neither curse nor revile.

Associate yourself with men of good quality, if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company.

Let your conversation be without malice or envy, for it is a sign of a tractable and commendable nature; and in all cases of passion admit reason to govern.

Speak not evil of the absent, for it is unjust.

When you speak of God or his attributes let it be seriously and with reverence. Honor and obey your natural parents although they be poor.

Labor to keep alive in your breast that little celestial fire called conscience.

## **King David’s thoughts on leadership (from 2 Samuel 23:1-4):**

*Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:*

<sup>2</sup>*“The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.*

<sup>3</sup>*The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me:*

*When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, <sup>4</sup>he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.*

(These words are put to music in an excellent choral piece by Randall Thompson called “The Last Words of David.”)

## **Moses directed attention about his leadership to the coming One Jesus Christ...**

Deuteronomy 18:15: *The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—*

The Bible says Moses was speaking of Jesus Christ—see Acts 3:22f.

## **Psalm 146 directs us not to trust in earthly leaders—but in the LORD who reigns.**

Take some time today/this week to read and reflect on this Psalm.

**FYI...**

**“A Faith Undefeated” is a movie about the life of Corrie Ten Boom.**

You can find this compelling 60-min movie for free on youtube.com (Amy and I watched it last night. –Pastor Ken)