Good morning and welcome to Coram Deo Bible Church. It's great to be with you this morning. I'm Grady Adkins and serve as the Executive Pastor. If you are visiting with us, either online or in person, would you text the word “GUEST” to the number on your screen? We would love the opportunity to welcome you to our church this morning. Secondly, if you would like to talk with someone, please text the word “TALK” to that same number. We have a Biblical Soul Care team that would love to help you through any difficulty that you might be facing. And finally, I want to thank Pastor Rob for giving me the opportunity to preach while he is away. It's always humbling to stand up here and share with you what the Lord has laid on my heart. And this week is no different. That said, let's turn in our Bibles to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is in the Old Testament and as a reference point is found a couple of books prior to Psalms. This is also the time to pull out the additional resources we have for kids (and adults) to help you follow along. There are word searches, crossword puzzles, bingo, and more. Erin Jewell and our Children’s Ministry team creates them each week using words from the message. Not gonna lie, they are pretty awesome. In fact if you have any of those with you hold them up so we can all see them. You can find those on our website and print them out. So let’s jump into Nehemiah and start out with some background to remind you a little about him and the timing of the book. The events of Nehemiah take place roughly 450 years prior to Jesus’ ministry on earth. And Nehemiah is much after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. To give you an idea, the story of Nehemiah takes place about 1,000 years after Moses delivered God’s people from Egypt. And now, the Jews are in exile again, which means they have been forced out of their land. Enter Nehemiah.

Erin Enters

Erin: Hey Grady.

Grady: Hey everyone, look. It’s Erin Jewell our Children’s Director.

Erin: What’s going on?

Grady: Well, as you can see I’m preaching. It is Sunday morning. I mean, I know things have not been normal lately, but we still worship the Lord together on Sundays.

Erin: I know, it’s just that I have been a little bummed that I haven’t been able to be with all the wonderful kids here on the weekend.

Grady: Well, I tell you what. There are some kids here today and I could use some help. Would you mind helping me explain Nehemiah?

Erin: Sure!!!

Grady: Great.

Grady hands costume pieces to Erin as they banter back and forth

Grady: There. I think you make a great Nehemiah. (to audience) But just to be clear, Nehemiah was a man, and not our Children’s Director. Now, a little bit more about Nehemiah. One of the reasons why I like Nehemiah and his story so much is because in the midst of crisis, Nehemiah was born. Not born as in a baby, but he became known because he saw that something was broken and knew he had to fix it. He was not the type of person to sit back and complain about the current circumstances. No. Nehemiah was a man of action because he trusted in and followed the Lord. If you read the entire story of Nehemiah you will see that he is a hero both in the literary sense and how he acts decisively for the Lord's glory. You will see that he weeps over fallen Jerusalem, he stands with a spear in one hand and a trowel in the other. (hand Erin spear & trowel) He rebuilds Jerusalem with Herculean fury. He was a man of action. (Erin flexes) He was a man of prayer. (Erin prays) He knew, “If it’s broken, fix it!”

So let’s jump in to God’s Word to discover some lessons learned from Nehemiah about fixing what’s broken. As we do, let’s give Erin a hand for “setting the stage” for us this morning.

Erin exits.

Let’s read the first 3 verses of Nehemiah.

(1) The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, (2) that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.
Stop right there. Basically the first 2 verses are background that we talked about. Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah, was residing in the city of Susa, under the Persian Empire. And his brother, Hanani, came to him from Judah with some others. Hanani and Nehemiah began to discuss the current situation in Jerusalem. And this is where everything begins. Take a look at verse 3.

(3) And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

Did you catch that? The people remaining in Jerusalem were in danger because the walls & gates of the city had been destroyed. The people were left unprotected. They were troubled and experienced shame. And when Nehemiah heard this, his eyes were opened to a great need. In fact, that’s the first point this morning. If you want to fix what’s broken, you have to first open your eyes to the need.

1. Open your eyes to the need

Sounds intuitive, doesn’t it? Sounds easy, doesn’t it? It’s not. (pause) It’s not because that means we have to get outside of ourselves and talk with others to identify the needs in their life which will show the needs in our community. Look at Nehemiah. He was comfortable in the city of Susa, which was probably about 700 miles from Jerusalem, give or take 100 miles, which was a long distance back then when people traveled by sandal and camel. When his brother arrived, Nehemiah could have taken him on a grand tour of Susa and talked about himself, but rather, Nehemiah got outside of himself to talk about what was going on in the lives of those in Jerusalem. And when he did that, his eyes were opened to the need.

It makes me realize that I need to change my conversations with people. It makes me wonder what conversations I need to have and with whom so that my eyes are opened to what is broken in our own community. It starts with a conversation, and there is a lot to talk about. Our community needs us. Actually they don’t need us. They need Christ. But, if we are willing, we can serve our community in a way that shows that we care about our community. And I know that you do. I know that you want nothing more than the gospel of Jesus Christ to penetrate our community in a way that binds us together. Because only the gospel changes a person. And when we care for and love on others it opens the door for the gospel to take hold in their life.

So I ask you, what conversations do you need to have so that your eyes are opened to what is broken? Because listen, when we ignore what’s broken in our community, we forfeit the right to have influence in our community. And we have influence in our community because we care. Not for some self-serving or self-promoting reason, but we care because we know people need Jesus. It’s broken. It’s time to fix it. We can’t ignore it.

And we don’t have to look very far to see tangible things that are broken in our community, especially these days.

Maybe it’s a single dad or mom. Maybe it’s a school teacher or administrator. Maybe it a city official. Maybe it’s an neglected or unwanted child. Maybe it’s a misunderstood man or woman. Maybe it’s a recovering addict. Maybe it’s someone who just got out of jail. Or maybe it’s your next door neighbor who seems to have everything together.

People are important and people are broken. And listen church, we cannot ignore them. Open your eyes to the need by starting a conversation and relationship.

If you want to fix what is broken, first, Open your eyes to the need. And secondly, Leverage what God has given you.

2. Leverage what God has given you

That’s what Nehemiah did. After Nehemiah’s eyes were opened to the need, he knew he could leverage what God had given him. Take a look a few verses down to the last part of verse 11.

“Now I was cupbearer to the king.”

You know, I’m starting to get a little thirsty.

Erin enters

Grady: I think I could use something to drink.

Erin: Did I hear you say that you were thirsty? Here is some water for you.

Grady: Thank you Erin.

Erin: It’s Nehemiah.
Grady: Oh, I get it. And perfect timing. I was just about to explain the position that Nehemiah held in the empire. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king. Would you mind explaining your position while I sip on some water?

Erin: I was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.

Grady: (cutting Erin off) That's the real reason I wanted you to explain it. It's so difficult to say "You Know Who."

Erin: Anyway, I was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.

Grady (cutting Erin off again) He, who must not be named.

Erin: (annoyed) King Artaxerxes. He isn't Lord Voldemort.

Grady: Oh. I always get them confused.

Erin: No. King Artaxerxes was real. And I was his cupbearer which meant that I held a position of high office in the empire. I had direct access to the king and was highly trusted. Being cupbearer meant that I made sure no one poisoned the king's food or drink. Think along the lines of security detail for the king. Anything the king was to eat, I was required to sample first. If something happened to me after I ate the king knew not to eat it! Although I was not a powerful person in the Persian Empire, God gave me a lot of influence.

Grady: Thank you Nehemiah. That's some good intel.

Erin: You're welcome. Now if you would be so kind to hand me your cup, I'll be off.

Erin exits

If you want to fix what's broken, leverage what God has given you. God had placed Nehemiah in the position of cupbearer to the king. As we just learned this was a position of trust and influence with direct access to King Artaxerxes, and he leveraged that.

If you read Nehemiah 2:1-8 you will see that Nehemiah leveraged his position and the king granted his request travel to Jerusalem to fix what was broken. In fact, the king gave him letters so that the governors would grant him access to what he needed as he traveled to Jerusalem. That's pretty amazing, and is probably an entire message in and of itself.

But the point is, Nehemiah wasn't a scholar or a pastor, or CEO. He was the cupbearer. And as such he had some power, some privilege, and a position that he leveraged in order to follow the Lord's call on his life and to serve the people whom he loved.

So what do you have at your disposal to leverage? Maybe you have access, like Nehemiah. Maybe the Lord has blessed you financially. Maybe you have time to give. Maybe the Lord has granted you with great abilities. We all have something to leverage because the Lord has given all of us something to use for His glory and to make His name great. To love God and love others.

And I love learning about how people in this church love on and serve others. I won't even scratch the surface of all that people are doing around here and in our community. There are business owners greeting you and ushering you down the aisles. There's a PhD researcher for a major university who leads our junior higher students. There are military men and women who have infiltrated our church and loving on others. That's a military term. There are lawyers donating time helping at risk children and people in our community. Moms and dads volunteer in our schools, impacting children in our community. Retired executives load food and deliver it to homes. There are plumbers, electricians, welders, and all sorts of people in the trades industry who deplete themselves for the sake of others. There are financial gurus helping marriages. And the list of people in our church who care for others so that God receives the glory goes on and on and on. And to those of you who are doing that, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. To God be the glory for giving us the gifts to love him and love others.

And if you are not leveraging what God has given you, let me encourage you to do so. You will be immeasurably blessed by playing a small part in a changed life.

If you want to fix what's broken:
1. Open your eyes to the need
2. Leverage what God has given you, and third
3. Change your perspective.

3. Change Your Perspective

Take a look with me at Nehemiah 2:11-16. It reads,
So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. (12) Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. (13) I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. (14) Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. (15) Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. (16) And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

Erin Enters
Erin: Hi Grady.
Grady: Well hello Erin, I mean Nehemiah. It’s nice to see you again.
Erin: It’s great to see you too, but listen, you never saw me. I’m on my way to inspect the disrepair of the walls of Jerusalem.

Erin goes to the walls that Jonathan (poorly) built and points out all that’s wrong.
Erin: Look at these walls, or lack thereof. It’s crazy! I mean this used to be a beautiful city with amazing walls of protection. And now the walls are barely knee high.
Grady: Is that where your name came from? Knee-High-Miah?
Erin: Real funny. No. My name was given to me by my father Hacaliah.
Grady: I bet the referees at basketball games hated him, Heckle-lich.
Erin: Oh my goodness. You’re not right. Anyway, look at the Valley Gate and the Dragon Spring. Worthless. The walls, worthless. The Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool – it's like they were never here. I mean I had heard about all of this, but to come here and see it for myself really changes my perspective of the reality in which we find ourselves. This spurs me on all the more.

Erin exits

Up to this point Nehemiah had only heard about the destruction of Jerusalem. And yes, God had placed a burden in his heart to fix it, but in order to make a plan to fix what was broken he needed to go see it for himself. He needed to change his perspective. This was the only way for him to be able to devise a complete and robust plan for change.

If it’s broken, fix it. And if you want to lead the way in fixing what’s broken go see it for yourself. Proximity changes perspective. As you get closer to what’s broken your heart will break in a way that compels you to work for change all the more. That’s a lesson learned from Nehemiah.

So how do you get closer? Get plugged in. Get involved. If you want to be used to impact our community we can help. Talk with Pastor Danny Phillips, our Outreach Pastor. He will connect you with the unconnected. We have many local partners who are active in this community and they need you.

Pregnancy Resources, Youth Hope, 180, Lives of Legacy, World Relief, and this is just a few to start with. Listen church, change your perspective. Get outside of yourself and your comfort. Go see the need for yourself and become a leader for Christ in our very own community. Build into the life of another person so that it will change the way they see God. So that they may know Him.

If you want to fix what’s broken:
1. Open your eyes to the need
2. Leverage what God has given you
3. Change your perspective, and fourth
4. Pick up the pieces

4. Pick up the Pieces

Look at Nehemiah 2:17. It reads, Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision (ridicule).”

Erin & Jonathan enter
Erin: (to the church) Men, women, fellow believers in God. I have inspected the city and we are in trouble. The walls and gates around our great city of Jerusalem have been destroyed. It’s time to pick up the pieces. It’s time to rebuild so that we are no longer a mockery of the Lord.
Who is with me? Who will help me rebuild the walls? No really, I need one person to come up here and help us rebuild these walls.

Erin picks one or two people to join her and Jonathan in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem while Grady continues his message. They rebuild quietly.

Grady: So after Nehemiah changed his perspective, he picked up the pieces. Literally. He said, “Let us build the wall of Jerusalem.” And he rallied the troops that were already there. Look at the very next verse, vers 18. Nehemiah continues. He says, “And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Nehemiah picked up the pieces, rallied the troops and started rebuilding the wall. Now remember that he was not an Engineer, or particularly skilled at building, at least that we know of. His skill was making sure the king stayed alive. The point is that Nehemiah had to do something that he didn’t know how to do. Isn’t that interesting? If you are willing to be used by God he will give you what is necessary to complete the task. And more often than not, it means that you might start doing something that you previously didn’t know how to do. And it’s almost like the Lord designed it that way so we have to rely on him during the entire process. Not knowing how to do something is not an excuse not to fix what’s broken! Be willing to pick up the pieces and the Lord will provide the way.

In the case of Nehemiah the Lord provided many people who knew what they were doing right there in Jerusalem. Nehemiah didn’t have to bring them with him from Susa, or request that the king send people to help. Nehemiah rallied the troop and chose people who were around him to help. Everyone Nehemiah needed to rebuild the town was already there. They just needed someone to cast a new vision.

And as I look around our Worship Center I see a lot of people here. Who of you will be the next Nehemiah in your center of influence? Maybe it’s at your workplace. Maybe it’s in your neighborhood. Maybe it’s in your school. Maybe it’s on your sports team or band. Or maybe it’s in your home.

If you want to fix what’s broken:
1. Open your eyes to the need
2. Leverage what God has given you
3. Change your perspective
4. Pick up the pieces
5. Keep Moving Forward

Speaking of moving forward, we are going to fast forward a bit in Nehemiah to chapter 6. But let me catch you up to speed. There was a lot that happened from Nehemiah 2 to Nehemiah 6, and I would highly encourage you to get in the Word and go back and read it. One of the things that happened during these chapters is that Nehemiah faced challenges from Sandballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. They opposed the good work that was being done because ultimately they wanted power and control. For these guys, it didn’t matter if the current situation in Jerusalem made life difficult for the people. Stopping Nehemiah’s work was an attempt for a power grab. Sounds familiar. Anyway, that brings us to Nehemiah 6:2. Look at this verse with me.

Nehemiah says, “Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono.” But they intended to do me harm. (3) And I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?”

Robbie and Eric enter. They hold baseball bats and hide them from Erin.

Robbie yells out to Erin from across stage – “Hey Nehemiah. Come over here, we need to talk.” Eric responds with “Yeah!!!”

Erin: The work I’m doing is greatly important, and it’s almost complete. I will not stop, but rather “Keep Moving Forward.”

Robbie and Eric sit down in frustration (backs toward audience). Erin and crew keep working.

In the midst of opposition, distraction, and difficulty Nehemiah kept moving forward with the Lord’s work. He didn’t stop. He didn’t let Sanballat or Geshem distract him from the mission at hand. He kept moving forward. And that’s a lesson we need to learn from Nehemiah. Keep moving forward!

When facing difficulty, remember, you are not in this alone. When something seems so unsurmountable, remember, you are not in this alone. Look around you. We are on mission together. It’s what Pastor
Rob preached about just 2 weeks ago. His message was titled Church: The Ties That Bind from Ephesians 2:19-22.

But what if what’s broken is so huge, so complex, it seems impossible? It seems unsurmountable. There seems to be no way to fix it. What then?

Do like Nehemiah and keep moving forward. He kept rebuilding, even in the midst of opposition. Even when people tried to distract him from the mission. Nehemiah kept moving forward.

If you want to fix what’s broken:
1. Open your eyes to the need
2. Leverage what God has given you
3. Change your perspective
4. Pick up the pieces
5. Keep Moving Forward, and finally,
6. Expect God to be Glorified through the Impossible.

Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for revealing to us the story of Nehemiah. Thank you for giving us an example of someone who fixed what was broken and a principles that we can apply to do the same. Father, help us to have eyes for the broken. Help us to step forward in faith, putting all our fears and comforts aside. Father, I know there is much that is broken in our lives and in our community. Help us to stand in the gap for your sake, for your glory, and be used to help change the lives and direction of those in need. Father we know that this seems difficult or even impossible at times, but we also know that there’s nothing that you can’t do. You heal the broken, you move mountains, you change lives. Lord help us to rest in that. I pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.

Benediction: Towards the end of Nehemiah, they dedicated the wall of Jerusalem to the Lord. And listen to what they said, “And they rejoiced that day, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.”

Let that be a challenge to you. As you leave here today, let your joy be heard throughout this community because You Are Loved.