



Sunday 25th July 2021

Welcome

Leader Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
All and also with you

Hymn **109 Crown Him with many crowns**

Crown Him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own:
awake, my soul, and sing
of Him who died for thee,
and hail Him as thy chosen King
through all eternity.

Crown Him the Son of God
before the worlds began;
and ye who tread where He hath trod,
crown Him the Son of Man,
who every grief hath known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for His own,
that all in Him may rest.

Crown Him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife,
for those He came to save:
His glories now we sing,
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of heaven,
enthroned in worlds above;
crown Him the King to whom is given
the wondrous name of Love:
all hail, Redeemer, hail!
for Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

Words by Matthew Bridges & Godfrey Thring
Music by George Job Elvey

Opening activity Community Rebuilding – DIY SOS

Confession

All Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought, in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,

through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.

Collect *(Prayer for the day)*

Leader Lord God, your Son left the riches of heaven
and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Everyday Faith Kay Dodds, St Mark's

Song 151 For I'm building a people of power

For I'm building a people of power
and I'm making people of praise
that will move through this land by
My Spirit,
and will glorify My precious name.

Build Your Church, Lord,
make us strong, Lord,
join our hearts, Lord through Your
Son;
make us one, Lord, in your body,
in the kingdom of Your Son.

Bible readings

Nehemiah 1:1-11 – Clive Boyle, All Souls'

1The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while
I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with
some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived
the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

³They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the
province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken
down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I
mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

⁵Then I said:

"O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his
covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶let your ear
be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying



before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

⁸"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

¹⁰"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

Matthew 7:24-29 – Mark Lempriere, St Mark's

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Sermon – Sam Waako

Nehemiah 1.1-11, Matthew 7.24-29

'Rebuilding the walls'

This sermon this concludes our sermon series from these last couple of months on the 'New Normal,' looking at Israel's return from exile, where we have been picking out similarities and lessons from this biblical story to help us think about coming out from the COVID-19 pandemic into whatever God has ahead for us.

If you have had a chance to engage with any of the sermons, I wonder what has stood out for you in this series?

For me, it's seeing God continuously at work for His people and for His glory. Even in exile without the Temple that symbolised God's presence, God was still on the move. And on their return to the promised land, God was still on the move. 'God at work' is the theme that runs throughout this period for Israel's history.

Last week, Rachel was speaking about God building up His Church; in the context of the Israelites it was the Temple (God's dwelling place), in our context, Jesus is to be the new temple, God's dwelling place, the one who lives in us and in effect we become God's temple and God's spirit dwells in our midst. Ultimately, as we look to 'rebuild walls in the new normal, God is the builder Rachel said, and if we are faithful, He will not only rebuild us, he will use us to rebuild fellowships, relationships, Church (His people) and communities.

In my sermon this week as we conclude this series, I want to pick out three lessons from Nehemiah on how we can join in with what the Lord is already doing in rebuilding specifically the Church, God's people.

Although we now know that the temple had now been rebuilt after the exiles return, the walls that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed were still in ruins, leaving the city and the temple defenceless against enemy attacks. The citizens had tried to rebuild the walls but had completely failed due to the constant attacks from their enemies. And it seems like no one thought this obstacle would be overcome – the walls remained in ruin for a very long time (70 years after rebuilding the Temple) and the people not only stayed in trouble, but remained in shame.

As we venture into the new normal, looking around us today, are you aware of any 'broken walls?' Walls of your own devotional life? walls of your relationships? Your Church and community? Is there something of which perhaps you should be grieving about, just like Nehemiah grieved for Israel? The reality is that we are surrounded by brokenness, moral, spiritual, material, physical.

When we are confronted by brokenness in our society, what are some of the responses that we make? What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah?

Ask

I think the first lesson we can take away from these verses in Nehemiah 1 is that we need and have to ask where the brokenness is. We are told in Nehemiah 1.2 that when Nehemiah's brother (Hanani) with a few other people came to see him, he says, "I **asked** them about the conditions among the Jews there who had survived the exile, and about Jerusalem." To know the need, the brokenness, Nehemiah had to ask first.

Just like Nehemiah had the opportunity to ask when brother and friends visited, next week, with our 'living stones survey' (see Notes and News), we are going to be providing opportunity for people to ask where the need is in this parish and further, and see how all of us can use our time, skills and willingness to serve God through the church. Selfishly, It would be great to have a few more people signing up to help with youth work in the parish.

When Nehemiah asked, he saw/heard of the great need, which burdened his heart. What 'burden' might God be putting on your heart that He wants to do through you? God will use that burden as the basis for action.

Prayer

After Nehemiah had found out the need, the broken walls, and after he had grieved, he didn't just get up and take action, he prayed. Not just for a day or two, we are told he prayed for at least four months before he took the first action to approach the king to give him permission to go to Jerusalem. Like Nehemiah, our first response ought to be to seek the face of God in prayer, to discover His plan, to receive His enabling to make a difference to the situation that is grieving our hearts. He took time to ponder on the anguish of the returned exiles, and it became his anguish, it was the motivation to intercede on their behalf, and he was ready to be part of the answer. Sadly, prayer is often our last resort, for Nehemiah it was his first resort. Alan Redpath writes, *"Recognition of need must be followed by earnest persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do."* If prayer is not our first action, we will be like the foolish builder, who built his house on sand, when troubles come, the walls that have been rebuilt will eventually collapse because they are not built on the rock that is Christ through prayer

To build on the rock means to be a hearing, responding disciple. Practicing obedience becomes a solid foundation to carry out any actions God might be calling you and me to do. So we need to pray continually that God gives us a heart to feel the burden of hurting people's needs and the willingness to get involved where we can offer some help.

Community

Last week we saw how God used the community to rebuild the temple. And although God gave the burden and vision for His purpose to Nehemiah, the walls were eventually rebuilt by the whole community.

I read somewhere that "in spite of much opposition and numerous hurdles, THEY accomplished the task in just 52 days! Note the word 'They.'

Whatever walls need rebuilding in our society, it's more effective to do it as a community. Which is why I love the DIY SOS program on BBC, where Nick Knowles who is the presenter of the program gathers a team, issues a call to arms and recruit friends, family and local trades to help transform the homes of families across Britain (The need). God's rebuilding process is going to involve all of us.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with a text that not only summarises all I have to say perfectly but is also pertinent to 'Rebuilding walls' as we gradually enter into

the New Normal. The text is from Amanda Udis-Kessler, a US hymnwriter, who wrote this text just after the 2020 US Presidential Election and has re-shared it following the violence at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021;

‘Rebuilding starts with weeping’

*Rebuilding starts with weeping, with tears that fall like rain,
With full and honest grieving for years of loss and pain,
For suffering and sorrow that never had to be.*

Rebuilding starts with weeping for all who are not free.

*Rebuilding starts with praying, with hopes allowed a voice,
With visions for our country, with reason to rejoice.*

*We offer up our spirits, our hearts and minds and hands.
Rebuilding starts with praying for strength to heal our land.*

*Rebuilding starts with loving, with care for every soul,
With yearning in compassion that all may yet be whole,
That enemy and neighbour may know a better day.
Rebuilding starts with loving, for love will show the way*

Hymn Build your kingdom here

Come, set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made
Come, set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit come invade us now
We are Your church
We need Your power in us
We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captive hearts released
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause

We are Your church
We pray: revive this earth

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray
Unleash Your kingdoms power
Reaching the near and far
No force of Hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this
Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ

We are Your church
We are the hope on earth
Build Your kingdom here.... X2

Affirmation of faith *'This I believe' song*

Our Father everlasting
The all creating One
God Almighty

Through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son
Jesus our Saviour

I believe in God our Father,
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in one
I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Our Judge and our Defender
Suffered and crucified
Forgiveness is in You

Descended into darkness,
You rose in glorious life
Forever seated high

I believe in You,
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord

I believe in life eternal,
I believe in the virgin birth
I believe in the saints' communion
And in Your holy Church
I believe in the resurrection
When Jesus comes again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Prayers ~ Andy Holcombe, *St Mark's*

Loving God, we sing out in joy because your spirit is in us. We are so glad to be able to worship you and to praise your name. We ask you now to hear us as we pray for those for whom life is hard right now. There are so many problems we want to raise up to you. We could spend the whole day in intercession and still not be finished. You know the problems in our hearts and heads, you know what concerns us and so we pray that your Spirit will prompt us to pray as you want us to pray.

We're happy that the COVID restrictions are largely at an end now here in the UK – but we know that many are scared to return to normal, or worried that COVID rates are growing again, that the situation is getting worse again. Lord, help us to act with care and compassion as we look after others, whether wearing masks in busy places or supporting those who are struggling to cope. We pray for our doctors and nurses and carers – for all health workers – that they can summon the energy to stay focused for a little while longer and then get the opportunity to take a step back from the horrific pressure they have been suffering. We ask that you will guide the Government and their advisors, so that they can tread a cautious and considered path to protect us and keep people in their jobs. And we pray that you will lead them to ensure that vaccines are distributed quickly and fairly to all nations, so that every one of your children can be made safe from this horrible pandemic.

Father, you know that sometimes it can seem to us as if you are not listening to our prayers, because our problems aren't disappearing, things aren't working



out as we think they should. That's especially true when friends or family are unwell. But still we pray, because we put our trust in you. Each of us knows someone that needs your healing power and grace right now. We lift them up to you now, especially remembering our brothers and sisters in Christ here. We pray for Eileen and Peter Bliss, Patrick Chapman, Brenda Collard, Frank Davenport, Barbara Jones, Lynda Kirk, Barbara Lloyd, Trevor Lloyd, Doreen McKinnon, Olive Park, Denise Randall and Joy Storkey, and we name others to you in our heart. Lord we ask you to look after each of them, to send your Spirit to ease their pain, calm their worries, remove their fear. And Father, you know that we find it difficult when people we love don't recover instantly, so we ask that you help us too, and teach us to live in your Spirit, to trust in your unfailing love. We thank you for the continued presence of your Holy Spirit, walking close beside us as our comforter and guide in our lives.

Schools and colleges have just broken up for the year, and children and young people are starting their summer holidays after enduring such a stressful academic year. Father, we ask that they will enjoy this time and stay safe and they will get the rest they need. And we pray too for their teachers and the support staff who have worked so hard to help their pupils and students, that they will rest and recharge, and find some peace during these few weeks. We pray Father for wisdom and creativity and inspiration for those in authority, that they will find a way to recover the lost learning for our young people when they return to their studies, without renewed stress for them or for their teachers.

Lord God, we see on the news, tales of refugees prepared to risk perilous sea crossings in tiny boats to reach the UK. When people here are struggling, when they need food banks to feed their own families, then it becomes too easy to see refugees as yet another threat, to see them as different, as other, and to forget that they are people just like us. Except they are people who have faced extreme poverty, war, destruction and who can see no way out except to risk everything and start a new life here. Lord as you have taught your children of Israel, help us to recognize ourselves in them, guide us to treat them as we would those who are born here, to love them as ourselves.

Loving God, we bring all these prayers together, and in the words from the service sheet, we ask you to hear them. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Lord's prayer

Leader As our Saviour has taught us so we pray.

**All Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn **428 Lord for the years**

Lord, for the years Your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world where men disown and doubt You,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without You:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us –
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Words by Timothy Dudley-Smith
Music by Michael Baughen
Music arranged by David Iliff

Closing Responses

Leader	Jesus, Lord of time,
All	hold us in your eternity.
Leader	Jesus, image of God
All	travel with us the life of faith.
Leader	Jesus, friend of sinners,
All	heal the brokenness of our world.
Leader	Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,
All	draw us into your future. Amen.

Blessing

Leader	Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord,
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rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing ...

All **Amen.**

This is the last of our pre-recorded services and printed service sheets. We hope they have been a blessing to you. Please join us in church or for our livestream services from 1 August.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

