



Being a Los Angeles Laker fan since 1973, I never in a million years thought I would show a Warriors clip in one of my sermons. However, I was compelled because of what this video revealed. Did you catch it? Andre Iguodala had been a star and a starter in 758 straight games prior to this past season with the Warriors. This year his coach understood that the Warriors would be a better team if Andre came off the bench. He came off the bench all year, and the Warriors became the NBA Champions and Andre received the Most Valuable Player trophy of the Finals. It's an incredible story of teamwork.

This video shows us that a great team has the same goal. They follow the same leaders. They love their teammates and think more of their teammates than themselves. They pay the price to accomplish the task. And sadly, you see they did everything opposite my Lakers did this year and had a completely opposite result. The Warriors actually won games.

It was fun to watch this team get built piece by piece and celebrate its success. But we are reminded today as we continue our series in Nehemiah titled, "Rebuilding Your Broken World" that there are more important things that need building in life. We are learning that God is in the business of rebuilding broken worlds. In chapter 1 we were challenged to listen to God and identify something in our world that is broken.

For some of us God brought to mind something wrong in our inner world... some sin, some conflict, some fear. For others of us, God brought to mind something in our outer world. Maybe it was an injustice, a glaring need that God wouldn't allow you to ignore any longer. God was disturbing you about making a difference.

We are seeing unfold before us in Nehemiah how God rebuilds broken worlds. We were impressed by Nehemiah's passion for the injustices he saw in his outer world. His people's beloved city of Jerusalem was left unprotected. Her walls were in rubble and unbelievers mocked his God. We saw Nehemiah pray for four months. We saw that Nehemiah not only prayed, he planned. We saw him take advantage of the opportunity the Persian king offered and he stepped out in faith to ask for the resources he needed to get started on a huge rebuilding project. And then we were inspired by his faith when he took no credit and instead said, "*Because the gracious hand of God is upon me, the king granted my requests*" (Neh. 2:8).

In the later part of chapter 2 we saw that Nehemiah had arrived in Jerusalem and he inspected the scope of the project. He saw broken down walls and burned gates that had been destroyed.

I see a progression. Nehemiah started with a passion and it led to prayer and planning and now we see in chapter 3, people. As we move into the act of rebuilding we see people. There is no rebuilding broken worlds without other people in our lives. A principle that lifts out of Nehemiah chapter 3 is:

God Raises Up Good Leaders to Mobilize People to Rebuild a Broken World

I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work (Neh. 2:18).

Rebuilding broken worlds requires that we either lead well or we allow ourselves to be led well. Either way good leadership is needed to rebuild broken worlds. One might be tempted to pass over Nehemiah chapter 3. The entire 32 verse chapter is a list of names, many too difficult to pronounce and information that seems redundant. But as we dig deeper we find that this chapter details a case study for project management.

Good Leaders Organize Their Project

As we study this map [map shown] we need to start at 12:00 and move counterclockwise. As you move around this wall, we notice some specific places mentioned in order in the chapter. Starting at the Sheep Gate moving along the wall to the Fish Gate, then the Old Gate, then the Valley Gate, and then at the bottom the Dung Gate, the Fountain Gate, Water Gate, Horse Gate, East Gate and Inspection Gate. These ten gates and the walls that connected them are all mentioned in Nehemiah 3.

The most striking thing we see in his project management is that he divides the job up into smaller more manageable sections. From what appears to be an impossible task, Nehemiah makes it possible. How many actual lineal feet of wall was rebuilt? We don't know exactly, but at minimum it was 2 miles of wall and 10 gates within the wall. After Nehemiah organized the project, he organized the people into teams and he assigned each team to a different part of the wall.

Good Leaders Organize Their People

Nehemiah delegated the authority. The word delegate isn't used, but it's obvious that is what happened. In chapter 3, I counted 44 separate groups or teams of people assigned to separate portions of the wall.

Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel (v. 1).

I don't think it was by accident that Nehemiah started at the far north of the wall. Two reasons: One, the north side was the most vulnerable to foreign attack. Years before when King David selected this spot for the holy city, he knew that the north side was the most vulnerable to attack. It was truly a city on a hill. And to approach from the west, south, or east side required a steep climb by attacking armies which made them exposed and vulnerable. However the north section was the flattest and therefore most vulnerable to invading armies. That's why this section had two towers. In Jesus' day the Romans saw it too and they built up these north towers and called them Antonia Fortresses.

Another reason: it's significant that he started with the priests. This was the closest wall to the actual temple. That's why the Sheep Gate was up there. It was where the animals were brought in for sacrifice. Since the Sheep Gate is mentioned first, the idea here is put God first in the project. The priests didn't sit on the sidelines and supervise; they girded up their ephods and rolled up their tunics. Even the high priest got into the action. Picture this: The high priest is out there with his jeweled breastplate, the one with the 12 precious stones signifying the 12 tribes of Israel attached to his ephod. The high priest also wore a blue turban with the gold plate on the front with the words "Holiness unto YHWH." He was out there picking up rubble and laying brick along with the rest. His outfit would need some serious dry cleaning after this.

The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors (verses 2-5).

So as verse 1 illustrates **priority**, verses 2-5 reveal **unity**. It was interesting to highlight every time in this chapter the phrases "next to him" or "next to them" or "after him" or "after them" was used. I counted they were used 28 times in this chapter. This

kind of unity just doesn't happen. It never just happens. This is a result of passion, prayer, planning and then getting everyone involved side by side.

Well, almost everyone. Some would not work. In verse 5 the men of Tekoa worked their portion of the wall, but their nobles "would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors." Tekoa was a town 11 miles from Jerusalem. The working men commuted to the job site, but their nobles called in sick. The phrasing "shoulders to the work" suggests that it was pride more than anything that kept them from pitching in. They didn't want to submit themselves. They were too important to get their hands dirty. These nobles were missing out on one of the greatest privileges of all time. They were too prideful to help rebuild a broken world. They were too prideful to experience the blessing of kingdom work. They were too prideful to put God first.

Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall (v. 8).

So we see **priority**, we see **unity**, and now we see **diversity**. Notice he used all kinds of people. He just didn't grab the big-armed, hard hat union guys who ride Harley's. He had jewelers and perfumers working on the broad wall. One would think that when the jewelers and the perfumers were finished, that part of the wall was the most dazzling and sparkling of all the parts. The perfumer probably had the west end of the city smell really nice. I think if I were in charge I would have assigned the perfumers to repair the dung gate to the south to try to do something about the stink issue!

We see priests, men of Jericho, city officials, women, bachelors, two guys who shared a house are mentioned in verse 23, Temple servants in verse 26, city guards or cops in verse 29, merchants in verse 32. It's all hands on deck. It's team ministry. It's not a like a football game where 80,000 spectators are in the stands who badly need exercise and 22 guys on the field who badly need a rest.

We see more as we dig deeper. Good leaders that mobilize people to rebuild broken worlds not only organize their project and organize their people, they also take care of their people.

Good Leaders Take Care of Their People

By knowing them

Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters (v. 12).

He mentioned all these families by name, and he even notices their kids as he manages this big project. Every name is recorded in his journal because Nehemiah saw them as special. Can you imagine how it must have felt if you were on that wall and Nehemiah remembered your name? Nehemiah saw his project

as something God made possible, so he saw everyone on his team as special people that God loves.

Nehemiah chapter 3 is a record of everyone's contribution, right? Well, one name was missing. Nowhere in chapter 3 does Nehemiah mention himself. Why not? He was as active as anyone, even more so. What a contrast to leaders in the world. Do you remember the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar? One hundred forty years before Nehemiah Nebuchadnezzar stood on the roof of his palace in his capital city of Babylon and looked out over his own city and said "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" What a contrast. Nebuchadnezzar took glory for himself and was judged for it. By contrast, Nehemiah gave credit to others, then he gave glory to God.

As we look deeper, we see he knew his teammates in even deeper ways. He knew where they lived and then he assigned them to work by their own homes.

Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shekemiah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters (verses 28-30).

To have them work by their own homes and their own neighborhoods was a brilliant strategy. If they were working on their own houses they would likely care more and be more personally involved. Also, it not only cut down on commute time to the job site, in case of attack they wouldn't be tempted to leave their own homes but would stay and protect their families.

By encouraging them

Not only did he know them, he made it a point to encourage them.

Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest (v. 20).

It was easy to miss this little statement tucked away in these 32 verses. It's one name: "Zabbai." It's one word: "zealously." Nehemiah evidently believed Zabbai deserved special recognition. Why? Maybe he worked overtime for nothing. Maybe he worked faster or harder. Maybe he skipped his coffee breaks. We really don't know, but it didn't go unnoticed by Nehemiah and it's in the Word of God and we are talking about Nehemiah noticing it and affirming it thousands of years later.

Here is another little statement: Down by the Water Gate where the temple servants were working, we read about the men of Tekoa again.

Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel (v. 27).

The men of Tekoa had finished their section in verse 5, but they didn't punch out. These guys from out of town went the extra mile while their nobles stayed at home. They sacrificed, really sacrificed for the team, and Nehemiah calls them out.

As I look around on a Sunday morning, I'm not sure we always connect the dots. Sunday morning at CPC is a work of God through people who are working sections of the CPC wall with passion, prayer, planning and action. Our passion is "to make and mature more followers of Christ." We believe to see this happen we need to make sure our walls and gates are built up and functioning so it is as easy as possible for all of us to come and worship... so it is as easy as possible for all of us to come and learn about how much God loves us... so it is as easy as possible for us to understand and embrace what God did by sending his son Jesus Christ to willingly give up his life on the cross and then take upon himself our sins so that we might know forgiveness and receive a new life in Christ... so it is as easy as possible to know the hope that comes through a real relationship with a God who rebuilds broken lives.

If we don't take anything else from this message, rebuilding broken worlds is a team sport. We need each other.

I think of several teams actively building and repairing with zeal around this place. I see in one section a Worship Team, in the adjoining section I see a Tech Team, and next to them I see an Usher Team, and in another section I see a Communion Serving Team, and right down in front I see a Prayer Team. In the outer sections of the wall I see a Greeter Team, I see a Welcome Team, I see a Sunday Worker Team, I see a Coffee Team and I see a Parking Team. And so you can worship without worrying about your children, I want to remind you that out yonder at the far part of the wall we can see a CPCKids Team, and next to them a Student Ministries Team. Let's appreciate and thank God for these teams.

I need you alongside me to rebuild broken worlds. And you need me alongside you to rebuild broken worlds. As the Apostle Paul said, *"...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others"* (Romans 12:5). I have been involved in some intense ministries over the years. I have learned some hard lessons about the importance of encouraging teammates in their place in the wall. Not only do we need each other, we are also better together.

Around Labor Day the weather in Wisconsin begins to turn. Days get shorter, nights become cooler, maples start turning color, and the geese are gathering. We had a big cornfield outside my office window, and Canadian geese would assemble in the field

and begin staging for their 3,000 mile journey south for the winter. Soon after I would see and hear smaller groups of geese airborne in the traditional "V" formation honking, flapping and flying in the southward direction.

There is a lot we can learn from the geese. There are several things that happen when geese take this long journey together. First you hear honking. That honking isn't random. The geese at the rear of the V formation honk with a purpose. They honk to encourage those in front of them to keep up their speed and to keep on keeping on. I don't know about you but I thank God for the people on my journey with me who honk at me to keep me focused.

We need others to honk at us

When you get discouraged in your wall building have some honkers around you. Look at what the Bible says about the positives of honking: *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on (honk at one another) toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Heb. 10:24–25).

Some of us have the spiritual gift of honking. Get gifted honkers in your life. Did you know that these walls were completely rebuilt in only 52 days? There must have been some gifted honkers on Nehemiah's project.

If you look at geese in flight you will also see and hear flapping. Flappers help the team when they are right next to us. Scientists discovered that as each bird flaps his wings it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a V formation the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. That means that if one bird can fly 100 miles alone, a flock in a V formation can fly together 171 miles together.

We need others to flap next to us

I have been so blessed to have flappers in my life to help rebuild broken worlds. Some of you have a lot of flapping power that is not being fully utilized for the rest of the team. Share your resources and see how far God will take you to make a difference. *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up"* (Eccl. 4:9-10).

Sometimes there are geese that get sick or wounded and they must drop out of formation. When a wounded or sick goose falls out of formation, two geese fall out of formation and follow him or her down to help and protect. They stay until the goose is either able to fly or is dead before they launch out to catch up with another group.

We need others to fall out of formation to help us

When one part of us is hurting, let's never forget something that makes the church different from the world. The church doesn't shoot their wounded; they fall out of formation to help. Sometimes suffering alongside is the best thing we can do to help someone restore their broken world. I think of our Prayer Team. Every service some of us in our church family come down front because we have fallen out of formation. I love watching this prayer team bear burdens by going down and helping and protecting. It's a great visual about how we are not meant to do this Christian life thing alone. *"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it"* (1 Cor. 12:26).

Finally, it's hard to tell while watching geese fly, but it's not always the same goose at the point of the V leading the flock. Remember, it's the point goose that faces the most resistance. We can learn from that goose. When the lead goose gets tired, he or she rotates back in the V and another goose moves into the point position to take the most resistance so the other can rest. There are seasons when:

We need others to take point for us

Many of us in our series have identified what is broken in our world. God has disturbed us. He has given us a passion to see something change. We are praying, we are planning, and now we must embrace the fact that our broken world won't be rebuilt alone. We need others alongside us for the journey.

It's right to ask this morning: What is our next step? I don't know a better way to word it. May God give each of us "the good sense of the goose" to understand that we are better together and rebuilding your broken world is not about "I" or "me." It's about "us" and "we."

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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