A Season of Rebuilding
Building a Future with Faith

- Church we are officially in the final week of this incredibly important series that I believe if we actually catch will take us into a mighty God focused future. There is massive spiritual significance to what we are casting. We are casting vision, we are developing strategy to see this vision come to fruition. Because God has fruit for us here!

- I firmly believe God is going to do something miraculous here! God has big plans for this body of believers for this church! I'm committed and I firmly believe God is committed to supernaturally building a future of ministry and effectiveness that is abundantly more than we could ever imagine.

Proverbs 4:25-27: "Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. 26 Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. 27 Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil." NLT

- Our eyes must be completely fixed on the future, on the vision, on what God is going to do. No matter what our eyes see what we face or experience, God is working. We must stay the path of strategy and future, we must be dedicated to the future! But remember in casting strategy it all flows from the very essence of who we are! Because we are Purpose Church and we exist to help people from every situation and every generation…

Vision: Find Jesus, Find Purpose

- Absolutely everything filters through this and the strategy God has given us is simply a vehicle of achieving exactly this. This strategy is a method to rebuild because remember we are in a season of rebuilding and through a dedication to rebuilding we are in fact building a future, the future God has for us!

Isaiah 61:4: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." NIV

- This season isn't at all about physical buildings, not about rebuilding our property or anything superficial like that, this is profound and spiritual, God is rebuilding our church through the mission and strategy God has given us. I believe we are entering a season, and not a short season but a long season of God's Favor through this rebuilding, through this commitment to focusing on the future!

- Through this strategy we will become a church willing to lovingly come beside people in this darkest, messiest situations, that we as a body love people enough to trudge into the muck and mire of where people have found themselves by chasing their flesh and the world. And we do so for people from every ethnicity, every culture, every age, every stage of life. And we aim to do all of this simply to advance the kingdom for generations to come, to radically change Zeeland/Holland and Ottawa County, to be a place of spiritual refuge and spiritual rehabilitation, restoration, deliverance, and discipleship.

- God has a supernatural future for us! God is going to do something mighty here in this church, our story isn't ending, it isn't on the tail end but on the horizon of a fresh new future that God Himself is building, and through our obedience we will supernaturally build with Him through His Holy Spirit and willingness. We must believe in the future, because there is one church! And it comes through this vision, we are going to be a church that reaches out that serves and loves.

- We have spent the last six weeks going over building blocks necessary for a church seeking vision, committed to the future. Because we will be a church absolutely committed to the future! We must be! And those building blocks were:

1.) Prayer
2.) Unity
3.) Focus
4.) Commitment
5.) Perseverance.
6.) Joy and Celebration

- We have been living the past six weeks fully in the book of Nehemiah and we have seen what has happened from the very start of this vision God gave Nehemiah all the way to the completion, the appointment of positions and even the dedication party. We have drawn parallels between what God had Nehemiah do through this rebuilding to us and our vision of rebuilding for the future.

- We will not see the future I whole heartedly believe God has for us without these building blocks. We must be a praying church because that prayer will make us aware, give us a burden for our community, and make us open to actually engaging with the needs of those around us! We must be praying! I can't emphasize that enough! We must to learn to ask for big things, we need

the audacity to ask! We must ask! I'm going to be asking for big things! We can't be afraid to ask! It's huge and only God can do it and we cannot be afraid to ask!

- We must be unified as a body of Christ, we must remain laser focused, we must be committed to seeing God do this and seeing this vision happen, we must persevere and we must do it all joyfully and celebrate the victories and testimonies of God all along the way! Now for the final building block you are probably thinking where do we have left to go in the account of Nehemiah, didn't we finish it? The wall is done it's even been celebrated already!

- Well, yes. So today we are going back, way back to chapter 2, clear to the very infancy stages of the building project. And the building block we are going to be dissecting today is…

Building Block 7: Faith

- Going way back to the beginning I want to remind you in chapter one Nehemiah gets word about the condition Jerusalem and it's walls and Nehemiah is driven to prayer and this all takes place in the month of Kislev it tells us.

Kislev: Is in the winter and when Hanukkah happens so not too far the time of year we are at right now.

- Then we see in chapter 2, which is where we are going to be today it is in the month of Nisan

Nisan: this month comes about 4 and half months later, this is the spring time

- So we see right at the get go Nehemiah prayed, fasted, sought after God for four months before we even get to chapter two. I want to remind someone in the room right now that just because you have prayed and sought and fasted and you haven't seen it yet doesn't mean God isn't working! God is working on your behalf right now! We can't allow the timetable to weaken our faith. God is working for you today! The answer is coming!

- Now I want to start at chapter 2 of Nehemiah now this may seem like review but we are going to look at this whole chapter from a different lens today and a deeper one. So let's read starting a verse 1…

Nehemiah 2:1-3: “In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, 2 so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” I was very much afraid, 3 but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”” NIV

- Man what a statement to say to this King, to King Artaxerxes. This may seem like not a big deal when reading this response from Nehemiah on why he is looking sad but this response most likely made the royal court uncomfortably quiet. This would have been followed with some awkward silence. Nehemiah, as the cup bearer is of course referencing Jerusalem but he doesn’t even say the cities name. And there is a reason for that. King Artaxerxes has history with Jerusalem.

- We can see some of this history in the book of Ezra. Earlier in this King’s reign during the rebuilding effort of the temple and the city of Jerusalem the King got a letter from some of his supporters and it didn’t paint the rebuilding effort in a positive light. Here is what the letter said:

Ezra 4:11-16: “(This is a copy of the letter they sent him.) To King Artaxerxes, From your servants in Trans-Euphrates: 12 The king should know that the people who came up to us from you have gone to Jerusalem and are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are restoring the walls and repairing the foundations. 13 Furthermore, the king should know that if this city is built and its walls are restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid, and eventually the royal revenues will suffer. 14 Now since we are under obligation to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonored, we are sending this message to inform the king, 15 so that a search may be made in the archives of your predecessors. In these records you will find that this city is a rebellious city, troublesome to kings and provinces, a place with a long history of sedition. That is why this city was destroyed. 16 We inform the king that if this city is built and its walls are restored, you will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates.” NIV

- Those King Artaxerxes men in the area where saying Jerusalem was rebellious, there was a reason they let it get destroyed and the King does not want to let it get rebuilt! So the King wrote back to them…

Ezra 4:18-22: “The letter you sent us has been read and translated in my presence. 19 I issued an order and a search was made, and it was found that this city has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition. 20 Jerusalem has had powerful kings ruling over the whole of Trans-Euphrates, and taxes, tribute and duty were paid to them. 21 Now issue an order to these men to stop work, so that this city will not be rebuilt until I so order. 22 Be careful not to neglect this matter. Why let this threat grow, to the detriment of the royal interests?” NIV

- So we see this history here. King Artaxerxes personally ordered that Jerusalem shouldn’t be rebuilt, he considered that city a threat to his personal interests. And now his cup bearer Nehemiah in front of the whole royal court, says the reason he is upset is because of what King Artaxerxes decided to do. Because the King left Jerusalem in ruins. See how it was probably awkward? But then the King responds to Nehemiah in chapter two with an amazing question in verse 4…

Nehemiah 2:4: “The king said to me, “What is it you want?”…” NIV

- Now looking into this verse and the actions of Kings of the time, there are moments where a King would perhaps ask a question like this less in sincerity and more as a test rather than an open door. In the context of the passage it’s unclear if this was a genuine question from the King wanting to grant Nehemiah’s ask or if it was just simply a test, almost baiting this seemingly rebellious cupbearer.

- But Nehemiah had faith and courage, to Nehemiah this was the open door he had been praying for, for the past four and a half months. This was it! Nehemiah was bold and full of faith but even in the boldest faith look at what Nehemiah did next in the latter half of verse 4…

Nehemiah 2:4: “…Then I prayed to the God of heaven” NIV

- I cannot overstate how important prayer is to us as a church committed to the future, seeking a vision, seeking to build a God honoring future. We must have faith but in equal measures we must pray! This vision, this strategy it doesn’t happen without prayer! Church we must pray, constantly! Nehemiah was praying and fasting for the last four months and even as he had his chance to ask, his open door. Nehemiah still prayed. He prayed again to God. So powerful. But after this prayer we see Nehemiah’s answer to the King. Nehemiah prayed to the King of Kings and now answers to a King.

Nehemiah 2:5: "and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."" NIV

- So if you are tracking with what is happening here, Nehemiah asked for something audacious, it was a huge ask. He just asked King Artaxerxes to allow Jerusalem to start being rebuilt when just before we know the very same King decreed, he issued an order that rebuilding of the city would be stopped. Nehemiah is asking The King of Persia to send his cupbearer to go and rebuilt a city that the very King of Persia said was rebellious and a threat to Persia. That's a big bold, and faithful ask! That was an act of faith and belief in God to provide a way where there didn't look like a way would come.

- Church if we are to see this vision come to pass, to see the future built just as Nehemiah did we are going to need some big faith! We know the spoilers of the account we know the walls were built Jerusalem was rebuilt and God did some mighty things. And I'm going to give you the spoilers to our story I'm declaring and speaking by faith:

- This church is going to thrive, is going to grow, is going to see countless souls saved and reached for The Kingdom of God! We are going to do mighty ministry we are going to reach every situation and generation of Ottawa County! We are going to see massive revival! And it is going to take faith! Just as it took Nehemiah having faith.

- So this morning in this final week of this series, the final building block we are going to take a close look at Nehemiah and go over what I'm going to call ***"Three Faith Mottos"*** we are going to need as a church and people as we move into this new season of vision and as we grow our faith and see God do the supernatural. And we are getting these mottos from the faith of Nehemiah. So here is motto one…

Faith Motto 1: "It's Worth The Risk"

- Let me tell you church, faith says it's worth the risk. And as we move into this new season, this new future fueled with the strategy and vision of every situation and generation it is going to come with risk. Outreach events or efforts are going to look risky, but faith knows it is worth the risk! Nehemiah knew it was worth the risk.

- Nehemiah asking what he did was incredibly risky, not only was he risking his job but he was risking his very life, he was even risking stirring up even more wrath from King Artaxerxes towards Jerusalem. It was a risk in every way. But he had faith. And faith says if it's right it is worth the risk! If it is God honoring it is worth the risk! But also risky doesn't mean foolish. Nehemiah was tactful and didn't say the name Jerusalem.

- He references it in a respectful way, Nehemiah spoke to the King in a respectful way, I would even say Nehemiah asked strategically, and I would say in a God lead way. He prayed first and boldly but strategically asked with all the respect due the King. But it was a risk. And the fact is you can't separate faith and risk. Following God and taking steps of faith in this broken, sinful world will always come with risk.

- Stepping out in faith will always to our human eyes look risky. It was a risk to follow God's leading and come pastor here. Leave our stable jobs to come here and begin the job hunt, live in the basement try to get into a community where we knew no one but it was where God lead me and I know despite looking risky to human eyes my faith couldn't do anything but follow God's leading and directing!

- And that's the challenge, if we want to do something for God we will have to take risky, vulnerable steps of faith and we must trust God and have the faith through it. Because faith is always worth the risk! ***As your Pastor I believe God is calling us to a season that is a step of faith. It will take faith to say yes God we will step out and reach out despite the risk, despite what our human eyes tell us. God your will and plan is worth the risk!***

- The risk was worth it for Nehemiah, and here is how the King responded…

Nehemiah 2:6: "Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time." NIV

- That on it's own would have been miracle enough, I'm sure the jaws of everyone in the royal court were dropped, everyone so surprised by the King's response. But here is the thing Nehemiah wasn't done with bold, faith fueled asking. He was willing to risk even more!

Nehemiah 2:7-8A: "I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph,

keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?"…" NIV

- Nehemiah just went from asking for permission to do something The King previously said no one was allowed to do to then asking for the King to fund and protect the effort of the thing the King previously said no one was allowed to do. But we see here not just active faith willing to risk but we see another aspect of active faith. Nehemiah was not just praying for the last four months he must had been planning too.

- Nehemiah in that moment knew exactly what this effort was going to take to accomplish these things despite not knowing how he was going to get them. I love what Nehemiah says next in verse 8, he planned and he asked but he knew it was solely because of the glory and presence of God that it even happened. Look at the second half of verse 8…

Nehemiah 8B: "…And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests." NIV

- Nehemiah knew and understood that despite that timber being in a royal park and set aside for royal purposes of the Persian government that the Sovereign God of the Universe owns created and owns everything. God owns everything and is sovereign over everything. ***Listen church if God's gracious hand is on you, you will be taken care of! And I know God's hand is on you, and on this church! God will supply all we need!***

- But the beautiful part of this is Nehemiah planned ahead, he knew where the timber was, he knew who he needed a letter to, he had a plan worked out and knew exactly what to ask. Which brings us to our second faith motto for this new season.

Faith Motto 2: "Plan Like God Can Handle It"

- Even before God opened the door, even before God provided Nehemiah was planning in faith. There were many things in this rebuilding project that was beyond Nehemiah but Nehemiah knew if it was beyond him it was on God to provide. Nehemiah prepared knowing God would provide. We too church need to prepare and be expectant and ready for God to provide!

- So many of us are just like Nehemiah in chapter 1 we are quick to pray. Which is amazing! We must be quick to pray, but sometimes we pray with no plan of

what to do if God answers our prayer. We have to think church, are we asking for things we aren't ready to receive? Because we not have to ask but we have to plan and prepare for when God does it! Because we know God answers pray but we have to plan with faith as if our God still answers prayer, because church He does!

We want to our faith to be active and here is the thing about active faith: active faith prepares knowing and trusting God will provide!

- It can be so easy to focus on the things with our earthly resources that we can't do, as individuals and as a church but we must plan and prepare the things we can while faithfully expecting God to do the rest. All while having a plan for when He does! The devil has devised a really good strategy that hinders so many christians and churches and maybe it is hindering you today.

The devil will try to get you to only focus on all the things you can't do today to rob your attention and focus from the things you can actually do, while you prepare for God to do the rest.

- Nehemiah could have focused on all the things that were beyond his influence, beyond what he could do or control. In his prayer he could have focused on the fact the timber was controlled by Asaph in the royal park and dwelled on the fact he didn't have it instead of planning and prepared for God to give him access. Nehemiah took that four months and planned, he prepared. He knew while it was God's job to provide it was his job to prepare.

- Church it is our job to prepare, we need to always be ready for God to provide exactly what we need and have a plan on what to do when He does. Faith postures itself ready for God to move. Nehemiah did all the planning and I love that in verse 8 after God directs and moves he doesn't take credit he gives it all to God. He writes it was all only because of God's gracious hand and favor on him in that moment. Church God is going to move in Zeeland and Holland and do mighty works through us and it won't be because of me or you, it is solely because of God's gracious hand!

- We have to plan like God can handle it and will provide it because let me tell you God is going to do it! And when God moves my gosh it's amazing and I know beyond any doubt with all faith He is just starting, there is a fresh and mighty move coming to this house, to this city!

- God moved so mightily here in Nehemiah chapter 2, Nehemiah basically steps on a political landmine with his audacious asks and because of God it's

approved, funded, and protected. God is so good. And God is working on your behalf too!

- So from here Nehemiah goes on a tour of Jerusalem, he is finally going to see what he had only heard about up to this point. And this is what he sees…

Nehemiah 2:13-20: "By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. 14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; 15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. 16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work. 17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 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. 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" 20 I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."" NIV

- Nehemiah here finally get's to Jerusalem's ground zero and sees how bad things really are, it was a mess, everything was destroyed. He hadn't even started yet and influential opposition is coming against him, and we know from later in the book those three stooges don't stop opposing him. It may have been a mess but works of restoration only happen in broken places.

- God's restoration power is so strong and regardless of the condition of what you need God to move and work in He can do it! He can restore! Maybe your marriage is broken, maybe your job is broken, your family is broken, your heart is broken, your joy is broken whatever it is your God is a God of restoration, He will do it! Which brings us to our third and final faith motto…

Faith Motto 3: "It's Never Too Messy For God"

- Church you may thing our congregation itself has gone through too much, it's too messy to restore, guess what? It isn't! Your marriage isn't beyond repair, your mess is never too messy for God! Look at what Nehemiah was starring down. Nehemiah saw just how messy Jerusalem's walls were but he knew how big Jerusalem's God is! Our God is bigger than whatever mess you need restoration in!

- I'm confident just as Nehemiah was, The God of Heaven will give us success. God is a restorer, a rebuilder, and the greatest one there is! No matter what you are facing, what you have faced, what you feel or have done or seen nothing can take you from God's hand and His hand can restore anything! Our church isn't too hurt for God to heal. You aren't too hurt for God to heal! Your spouse isn't too hurt for God too heal! God can do it!

- No matter what you are in need of today it is not too messy for God to start and finish a renewal project in your life! It could be addiction, depression, sickness, financial, no matter what God can do it! He is big enough and gracious enough!

- I'll be honest about the wall of our church, we are struggling financially, we need God to move and provide a whole new way. Our city and surrounding areas need spiritual renewal like never before and our church itself is in desperate need of breakthrough. We need to be honest just as Nehemiah was. Our situation may be messy but God is bigger! We know it's not too messy for God!

- Launching a new vision in this season of our church is big, it's difficult much like the timing of a rebuilding project for Nehemiah. But God builds back better than anyone could imagine. And provides for everything. We must plan like He is going to do it no matter how messy it seems. We know and I as your Pastor admit full dependance on the gracious hand of God, because if He doesn't show up it won't happen. But we serve a God who always shows up!

- Nehemiah throughout this whole study we have seen it, he led an extremely important work of renewal and rebuilding and he was confident to to rely on God and have faith in God's success and provision. He said it this way:

Nehemiah 2:20: " I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success…." NIV

- Nehemiah's words were powerful but I love the words of Jesus the author and finisher of the greatest spiritual renewal act of history, the cross. He says this in Matthew…

Matthew 19:26: “Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”” NIV

- Jesus wasn’t talking about a building project here or even vision, He was talking about salvation. As much as this series has been looking at Nehemiah and as much as I admire and learn from Nehemiah he isn’t why we have faith, it’s Jesus and His ultimate renewal in our world and my life. Jesus left the throne room, and not of some Persian king but the throne room of Heaven, willing to take on flesh to be fully man and fully God because He loved us enough to say we were worth the risk.

- No heart is too broken, no grave is too sealed for Jesus’s mighty hand, for God’s mighty hand! That’s the rebuilder that brings me faith and I put my faith in, and He is the rebuilder today that is at work in our church, in your life and in our future! Now like the Israelites when Nehemiah came with the vision I am coming to you with vision: Every Situation and Generation and I pray together through faith in Jesus our victor we can say together: ***“Let’s Get to Work!”***

- We must chase this vision in this new year with the building block of faith and today I want to bolster your faith one more time with scripture you all probably know by heart.

Mark 11:22-25: ““Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. 23 “Truly tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”” NIV

- The mountain of the future, of vision, of provision, of souls, whatever mountain you are seeing today I pray your faith is grown to speak to it with the authority of faith in Christ behind it. If you need some faith fueled praying agreeing with you right now I want to pray with you, I want to agree with you for something. If you need more faith I want to pray over you. But together we are going to chase this vision, put our hand to the plow and get to work! This is just the beginning, I am speaking by faith: God is going to do the miraculous here!