



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2020

NEHEMIAH 8:1-9  
LUKE 10:25-29

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR  
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

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A man walks into a church, and immediately...

kicks his priest in the shins...

Quickly that same man apologizes with great remorse saying:

- "I'm so sorry, you see:
- I have this compulsion to kick people..
- I fight it, but I don't know what to do about it."

The priest now limping says:

"You need help...Here's the number for a Biblical Counselor.."

Months go by...

The Priest sees him again but keeps his distance...but the man says:

"I've been to the counselor, problem solved!"

The Priest with a sigh of relief goes to the man to give him a big hug—  
but the guy kicks him again, this time in the other shin!

Crying out in pain the priest says:

"I thought you were cured!

"I am," said the man.

"I still kick...

I just don't feel guilty about it anymore."

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Today we're going to dive in on guilt...

When was the last time you heard a sermon on guilt?

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I asked my barber what she thought of the word guilt...she looks at me and says guilt? I feel guilty just talking about guilt!

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I love what one daughter wrote, she said:

My mother doesn't just enjoy guilt trips,

she runs the travel agency!

This sermon however, is not your mother's guilt trip.

By the end of it, I pray you will see guilt in a whole new light.

You see, believe it or not, there is a good form of guilt, and a bad form of guilt...

Let's examine both through the lens of Nehemiah...

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Chronologically, Nehemiah is the last book of the Old Testament.

This might surprise you, Malachi after all is the last one listed, but the books of the Bible are not listed in chronological order...

Nehemiah ends in the year 425, 425 years before Christ, ...there would not be another word from God for 400 years..

Here's the whole story..

King Solomon dies...

but doesn't form faith in his own family..

Israel falls into chaos..and splits into two...

- The Babylonians, those from Iraq defeat Jerusalem kicking out all the Jews.
- Years later, the Persians (what is now Iran) would overtake Babylon...
  - And allow the Jews back into what is now a broken down desolate City of Jerusalem.

Enter Nehemiah..A Jewish Layman..

- Working as the King's Wine-Taster in the palace...

When news reaches Nehemiah that Jerusalem is in shambles and the walls and gates had been destroyed...

- Nehemiah weeps and moves to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and her walls which he accomplishes.

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But there's one problem...

While he rebuilds city walls...

The spiritual foundation of the people...lay in ruins!

The Bible, the Word of God had not been made the center of the community.

They had lost the centrality of Scripture...

i-e...

- No one was keeping the sabbath anymore
  - It looked like any other day
  - Birthday parties, stores open..

- The 10 commandments- gone from their hearts
- God-gone from their hearts

Therefore..

Nehemiah knows the next project is to rebuild their hearts

and so he calls on Ezra the priest to hold a revival in the town's square...

Ezra and Nehemiah make a decree to all:

- Stop your errands
- Suspend your hobbies
- Shut down your to-do lists

Time for an old fashioned revival, that's what Chapter 8 is all about!

Nehemiah has a platform built..

It's massive, a pulpit about this high, but big enough for 14 people ...

And this is intentional!

Ezra and Nehemiah want to both..

- ELEVATE THE WORD OF GOD...
  - THE SAME REASON IN 1751, THAT THE BUILDERS OF THIS PULPIT GAVE IT SUCH HEIGHT..

AND:

- **To show that those who wielded authority in the community were themselves**
- **under**
- **and not over**
- **the Authority of God**
- **They ALSO wanted the people to know it was**
- **THE WORD OF GOD**
- **that regulated the whole life of the community!**

It would be like Mayor Tecklenburg saying to our clergy team of St. Michael's....

Build a platform in the intersection of Meeting and Broad Streets and let's have a revival..

Let's do it!

So, picture that long and tall pulpit...

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Now picture who was there..

The Bible says 42,000 men..plus...

- Women
- and others who could understand...

The very mention of women is very unusual..  
..and not just women, but children are implied too!

This was to be a revival for all the people, every age and stage of life!

Men, women, boys and girls!

This is why they couldn't do this in the Temple!

In the temple, women and children would not have been allowed, they want everyone there...

42,000 plus women and children..**I wish we had their sound system!**

Okay, the people are gathered, what do they do?

**Ezra reads Scripture for 6 hours...**

And the Bible says everyone of them listened attentively...did I say...6 hours!

**Now, my average sermon is 18 minutes, or about 2,100 words...**

**I'm paid by the word....  
Can you imagine 6 hours!**

But notice Ezra doesn't just read the Word, he applies the Word to their lives..

How?

We're told that at regular intervals..

- Nehemiah the Governor

- Ezra the Priest
- and the 13 teaching Levites...
- regularly walk off the stage into the crowd to make sure everyone could apply the Word!

Imagine, it would be like all the clergy and vestry along with the Mayor stepping off the platform saying...did you get it?

Maybe we should try that right now...

Into the crowd...

Layne...

Edmond

Robert..

Are you understanding this so far?

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Okay...

**WHAT...**

what were they reading?

I promise you, it wasn't Leviticus!

Scholar and Author Laurence Brown, in his 1920's classic **Early Judaism** writes that Ezra was probably reading Deuteronomy Chapters 1-15..over and over..

DEUTERONOMY 1-15...

- How God rescued their ancestors from Pharaoh
- How Idolatry was forbidden
- All the 10 Commandments
  - Make God number one in your life
  - Do nothing but worship on the Sabbath
  - Honor parents
  - Forgive each other
  - Cancel each other's debts every 7 years

- Tithe 10%
- And THE most important commandment...
  - LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR
  - HEART
  - SOUL,
  - MIND
  - AND STRENGTH

■ LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF!

■ TELL YOUR CHILDREN!

REVIVAL!!!!!!!

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6 hours of deep teaching with application to every generation!

How did the crowd respond?

Let me tell you what they didn't do:

1. They don't complain how long it was
2. They don't leave the scene
3. They did not grumble...

The Bible says....

(PAUSE)

**THEY**

**.....**

**WEPT.**

WHY?

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Up to this point, the Word of God had been

- Dis-----Torted
- Dis-----Believed
- &
- Dis-----Regarded

But now though, the Word of God had cut open their hearts!

For the first time they could see the Gap between:

- God and His love for them
  - and
- themselves

They weren't just listening with their minds..

But with their hearts!

Their hearts broke over how they had left God,

Tears of repentance...

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Can you picture it?

- The crowds
- The teachers
- The reading of Scripture..  
producing the purest most beautiful form of...

dare

I

say...

**GUILT.**

You see, there is bad guilt and there is good guilt.

- The bad guilt that drowns you until your useless
  - Verses
- The good guilt that fires your soul into purpose..

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- Guilt that leads to condemnation and
- hope-less-ness is called shame and is evil.
  
- Guilt that leads to life change and repentance is wise and Biblical



• This Good guilt is like the red warning light on the dashboard of the car.

• We can either stop and deal with the trouble, or break out the light.

Back to bad guilt, let me get this out of the way.

Some of us are weighed down by guilt we cannot and must not carry anymore...

- Perhaps you did something horrible years ago...
- You've been forgiven
- Yet you still carry the guilt.
- Or something happened you had no control over and it's killing you..

This bad guilt is like wearing a jacket with huge rocks in each pocket, it just weighs you down.

That French fashion designer Coco-Chanel said:

*Guilt is the most  
painful companion of death...*

The only way to rid yourself of this kind of guilt is to say Jesus, take this from me..

- I've been carrying it for years
- I give it to you today God.

Jesus died on the cross to take it, you have no right keeping it!

This is why we have Lent, My chains are gone I've been set free!

Guilt that leads to condemnation is **not of Jesus...**

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BUT

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A Guilt trip that leads us to the destination of repentance and action is the good guilt!

Libby Copeland, in Family Magazine two years ago writes:

“No child in the history of humanity was born knowing how to say sorry!”

Saying sorry is not a natural response, it is one of the uniquely Christian virtues that must be learned.

Guilt:

- That sorrow for our own sin
- That sorrow for our own behavior
- That sense of regret
- Is the vehicle that leads us
- that moves us to say sorry.

Copeland takes it one step further and says:

“Guilt, when prompting us to think more deeply about our sin actually holds our species together,

Good guilt can be a social glue!”

WE PROBABLY NEED MORE OF THIS GOOD GUILT!

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Let’s dig deeper..

How do we know the difference between the good and bad guilt?

- IN BAD GUILT OR SHAME WE SEE NO WAY OUT BUT CONTINUED CONDEMNATION...
- Godly guilt always always leads to hope which leads to action.
- BAD GUILT ENDS WITH SHAME WHERE WE SAY:
  - "I AM BAD."
- **Good Guilt is:**
  - "I DID something bad
  - BUT JESUS WHO IS GOOD
  - **CAN and will... TRANSFORM IT."**

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This takes us back to the Jews..

We know they have the good guilt because Chapter 9 tells us where that guilt trip takes them..

It takes them into a massive authentic confession of sin, leading to decisions made:

They covenant:

1. To make God and worship number one on the sabbath
2. To Care for the temple
3. To read the Scriptures
4. To Tithe 10%
5. To Forgive each other
6. To Cancel all debts every 7 years

This guilt trip leads to a changed nation!

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My friends, we are living in a time very similar to the time of these Jews...

The walls of our city are beautiful, the buildings and parks, amazing.

But the hearts of our people are drifting further and further from Jesus.

The hearts of our children and their children are drifting!

Do we care?

Do we have a desperation to teach the children of this church Scripture through Sunday School and mentorship?

Is Scripture, the reading of the Word even central in **OUR OWN** everyday-life?

Are we waking up to Scripture day by day to allow it to shape us into the image of Jesus?

I'm not asking to condemn but to restore!

You may not know this but one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin, to produce in us good guilt..

John 16:

- When the Holy Spirit comes
- **He** will convict the world

- and show us right and wrong...

Meaning one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to produce Godly guilt to pierce our hearts into repentance and action!...TO give us a new desire for intimacy with Jesus and his Word at our core.

Might today be our Nehemiah 8 moment, to leave all the bad guilt on the cross...

Things you can do nothing about..

AND AT THE SAME TIME BE honest with ourselves and embrace the good guilt..

Who have I not forgiven? What needs repentance?

Like Ezra, the purpose is not to condemn, but to move to action!

Let me end with a struggle from my own life.

Last Thursday, and due to the Corona Virus,

my wife and I were struggling about whether we should call our daughter Wimberly home

from her semester abroad in Florence Italy.

It was decided we would have a conference call first thing last Friday morning...

- THE CALL WAS A DISASTER.

From the moment we all got on the call,

- UNMITIGATED DISASTER.

Arguing, debating, and it was my fault!

Why?

I got on that call **before I had brought this to the Lord,**

**before I heard from His Word for the day.**

**During that call, the guilt over not first praying and seeking God's word welled up within me, and got to be so strong I had to say...**

**We have to stop this call..**

- Give me an hour
- I need to center
- I need to hear God's voice first.

Wouldn't you know it,

The Bible in a Year verse assigned for the day:

Psalm 27:

*Your face Lord  
I will seek,*

*wait for the Lord,  
be strong,  
wait for him...*

My guilt prompted action that made the second conversation very different.

In the next call...

God brought order out of painful chaos.

Wimberly was home within 36 hours.

My friends:

Leave the bad guilt of condemnation and shame on the cross...

But let the Holy Spirit convict you to take the good guilt trip..

- Is God and his Word number one in our lives?
- Are we working on the Sabbath?
- Are we honoring our parents
- Are we tithing
- Are we forgiving?
- Are we **LOVING THE LORD OUR GOD WITH ALL OUR:**
  - HEART
  - SOUL
  - MIND

○ AND STRENGTH

• LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES?

• ARE WE:  
INTENTIONALLY  
STRATEGICALY

○ AND  
DAILY PASSING THAT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION?

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LET US PRAY.