



Good morning everyone,

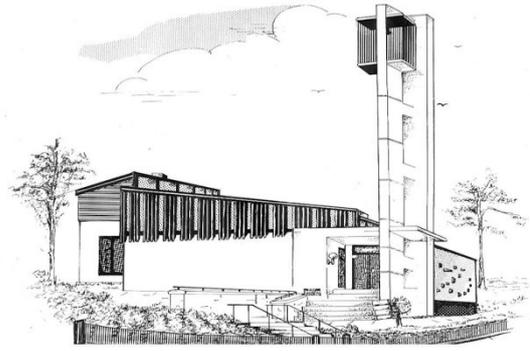
A warm welcome to yet another Sunday Morning Devotional which we now align with our Prayer and Reflection Service held in the Church every Sunday morning. You will of course be most welcome should you wish to join us on a Sunday morning, whether a newcomer or a "well Kent face" and all we would request from you is that where possible you give advanced notice. (Information for this is found in the intimation page following this.) The week that has passed has had everyone wondering how the nation would vote and there will be some who are delighted with the result while others maybe less so. The important thing for us in the National Church (and indeed every Denomination) is to always rise above the story of politics and be a voice critical of injustice, whilst commending those who stand for what is Right but above all seeking to proclaim the risen Saviour before a broken world and society who really needs him now more than ever before.

In the meantime we watch with interest for new announcements about further movements out of the Lockdown story. I know, having spoken with a number of people, that they Hope to see some movement in terms of social distancing, mask wearing and even possibly singing sooner rather than later given that people in the church are now fully vaccinated in many cases while others in most cases in the church are 1<sup>st</sup> stage vaccinated all of which means it should be safer than it has been Before. Some have voiced their frustration at the pace of these things and if I am being honest, I share some of their concerns. It seems a bit crazy that we can sit in a restaurant, a coffee shop or a gym and have people in quite close proximity to one another while churches operate with more stringent safeguards and all the more so when you consider that Churches have always been, in my view, among one of the safest places that you could go to prior to relaxing some of the protocols and do so safely. We will continue to watch with bated breath for when church offices can open and halls can be used once again for meeting other than for the purposes of worship.

As we do that, we look to God in his goodness to keep and guard over as we continue to honour Him in Faith and trust that we might echo the thoughts of the hymn writer who said, "It is well with my soul"

Have a great week

# Park Church Announcements



## Church Flowers

Flowers this week were kindly donated for the church by Mrs Margaret Loudon.



*As many of you know already restrictions placed upon our lives as a consequence of these Pandemic Times are gradually being relaxed. While churches are now open or beginning to open again, there are still quite tight restrictions on what we can and cannot do and so we simply ask for your patience for that wee bit longer as we look to see things begin to return to what we might see appropriately as a Normality we can enjoy. If you need any guidance about the state of restriction at the moment, please speak with the minister.*



## Carnwadric Church

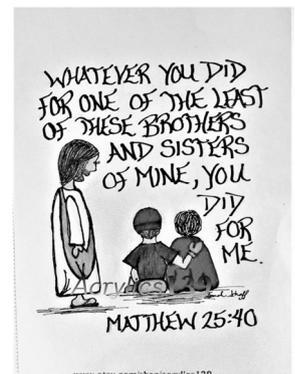
### Foodbank Shopping List

UHT milk, Sugar, Coffee and Juice (diluting) along with tinned products such as:-

Tinned carrots or peas Custard, Rice pudding, Fruit, Spaghetti, Baked Beans, Soups

Tins for meals: Mince, Stews, Hotdogs, Ham, Corned Beef, Ravioli, Mac & Cheese As well as Cleaning Products & Personal Hygiene Products. -

**A big Thank You from all at the Foodbank Team at Carnwadric Church.**





## Re-opening of Church

*It is Vital that You Please observe the following Guidelines*

To prevent congestion at the Door and thus maintain Social Distance

Please give advanced notice of your intention to attend Church that Sunday.

This is very important and easy to do.

Simply contact Bert or Sandra Dickov on either 01413168143 or 07947611412





*God waits for you to communicate with Him. You have instant, direct access to God. God loves mankind so much, and in a very special sense His children, that He has made Himself available to you at all times.*

*(Evangelist and Pastor Wesley L. Duewel)*

*(1916-2016)*

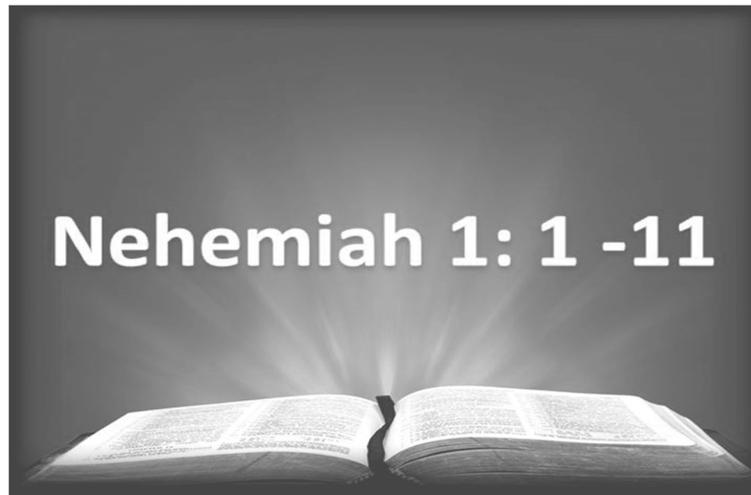
"<sup>11</sup>You are worthy, our LORD and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Rev 4: 11)

Let us pray

God our Father, Thank you for the privilege of prayer and the means it offers, how we can now come to you boldly and in full assurance of your great Love for us having a sense and deep appreciation of your Grace upon us. Your Word reminds us of how You are the Maker of the Heavens and the Earth and that you remain sovereign over all. You are the Same as you were yesterday, today and will be tomorrow. We thank you for the precious gift of your Son Jesus and all he means to us and we pray that we might echo the words of scripture reminding of how You are worthy, Gracious God, to have the glory, honour and power.

We thank You for the trust we can have in Jesus with the security it brings and the hopes it offers but we also have to confess there have been times where we have went our own way, fearful of what others might say, we have often hidden our Trust in you and went with the crowd instead. By your Spirit grant us the courage of conviction to stand out and to speak up for the cause of our Saviour, so that others may see our Saviour living through us as we live our lives for Him.

Almighty God, in these times of uncertainty we pray for your Peace, We pray for wisdom in these times of searching for the deeper truths of life. Inspire us as we read your Word afresh and heed your call upon us in a new light. In these times of spiritual restlessness, we pray for comfort, in times of stress and anxiety, we seek you peace and in those moments of temptation enrich our lives with a fresh sense of your call to faith and faithfulness Lord. We pray for your word to enrich our lives and for your Spirit to work in us and through us bringing us closer to You through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we all be granted that same wisdom, comfort, and promise throughout our daily lives, that some day we may all gather in your house and praise you more lovingly and faithfully. In Jesus' name we pray..... Amen



## Nehemiah 1 : 1 - 11

### *Nehemiah's Prayer*

*1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:*

*In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,*

*<sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.*

*<sup>3</sup> They 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.'*

*<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said:*

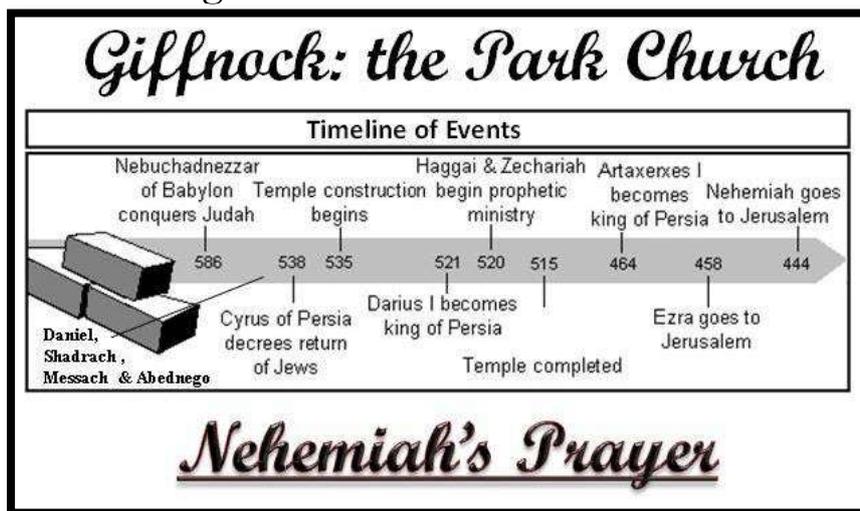
*'LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you.*

*<sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

*<sup>8</sup> 'Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but 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."*

*<sup>10</sup> 'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> 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.*



Good Morning,

For our Devotional I thought to dip into the Old Testament and review the story of Nehemiah, a convoluted tale during the Third Diaspora and a story which is interwoven with other well known figures of the Old Testament, such as Zerubbabel, Ezra and Daniel.

To put things into a current context we can understand, the term Diaspora can be seen as applying to those of the Syrian people fleeing the war in Syria, where circumstances there cause mass migration of the population. You can also see the term Diaspora in terms of enforced repatriation such as what we see happening in Myanmar with the Rohingya People and in China with the Uighur People as they are systematically rounded up and shipped out often against their will. The first Diaspora in the Old Testament was when the people of Israel were enslaved by Pharaoh and the Egyptians and brought out by Moses back to the land of Canaan. The second Diaspora was when the Assyrians conquered the land of Israel and Judah in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC. By the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century, they had again been conquered this time by what was the Babylonian Empire and would eventually become the Persian Empire.

Daniel had been repatriated from the land of Israel and Judah in the late 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC as Israel had been conquered by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar where he was forcibly relocated while still a young boy. He was trained in the ways of the Babylonian Royal Court and culture and he would eventually rise up through the ranks to become Chief Advisor to not just King Nebuchadnezzar but also his successor Darius the First.

Nehemiah was one of three key leaders who would leave Babylon decades years later to assist in the restoration of Jerusalem and the re-establishment of the land of Israel and Judah. First there was Zerubbabel whose task was to oversee the reconstruction of the Temple which began many years earlier in

535 BC. Then came Ezra in 458 BC, who was responsible for the Reinstatement and Reform of Temple Worship, where he established in religious practice that which would continue to the time of Jesus. Scholars have nicknamed Ezra 'the Father of Judaism' as his establishment of the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) and the commandments within it are now seen as the bedrock of religious life and practice across the land over the subsequent centuries. Thirdly we come to Nehemiah whose task was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem making the city secure by the year 444 BC.

That was the story of how things came to be, but what about Nehemiah - what do we know about him? Information is not great but we know he was trained in the ways of the Royal Court, no doubts from a young age, he had probably never known his native homeland of Israel being brought up instead in Babylon. We do know that he was the Cupbearer of the King which was seen as a role of great trust and one that would be dangerous as well. He would have been the one to bring any drinks for the King to Him but not only that for he would also taste it before the king drank it on the one hand, to test the quality of the wine but on the other to test for poison.

Researchers have worked out that Nehemiah's account begins in 445 BC, and that this date is important because the prophet Daniel, a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, wrote the "70 weeks of years" prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) based on a very specific date—March 15, 445 BC. This date is crucial to the beginning of the prophecy as it starts the prophetic timeline taking it up to our own and ends with the long awaited Return of our Lord Jesus.

That sets out the background of events leading up to Nehemiah Chapter One. This chapter leads on to the moment when He seeks the King's permission to stand down as Cupbearer and leave for Jerusalem. In the opening verses of Nehemiah Chapter one he asks how those who remained in Israel are doing and he is vexed at the response, so much so, that he is moved to tears. We read how, *"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."* His response to this was immediate, which comes to the first great point of our Reflection.

### 1. Clearly Nehemiah was a Man of Profound Prayer

Prayer was his first response and so many of us need to learn that lesson of Prayer being our court of first appeal and not our last which is more often what happens. <sup>13</sup>*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* <sup>14</sup>*You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* (John 14: 13& 14). When you read these words you begin to see a picture that follows on

from the story of Daniel who although repatriated from his homeland and brought up in the ways of the Royal Courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the First, he never forgot the importance of prayer at the beginning of the day and at the day's end. It seems likely that although naturalised in Babylon, he never forgot the heritage of his birth and adopted a life of devoted prayer. You could also read into this story a sort of Gethsemane moment for Nehemiah as he looks to find the best way to tell the King that he wants to go home and rebuild his homeland. It maybe that he is full of the kind of angst that Jesus had in Gethsemane, a task he was not looking forward to but knew it had to be done. I am sure to a greater or perhaps a lesser extent we have all dreaded having to do something we would rather not and would rather 'this cup would pass' instead to another.

Nehemiah had served the King faithfully on the one hand and the King might not want to lose Him while on the other not knowing the mood of the King he was perhaps wondering if his request might result in his Summary execution because that was the kind of total power that Kingship had, the power of a man's life in his hand on the whim of a king. The First thing Nehemiah did in all this was to seek the counsel of God - a lesson we should all adopt. The second thing he realised was that it was not always about Him, there were others who he needed to pray for and that is exactly what he did. *"<sup>6</sup> let 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". (Nehemiah 1: 16)*

## 2. Nehemiah was a Man of Profound Faith and Devotion

Nehemiah realised that God's people had blotted their copy book in God's eyes. He was not blind to the people's sinfulness and lack of faithfulness,

*"I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup> 'Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, (Nehemiah 1: 6-8).*

Realising his own as well as the people's sinfulness in God's eyes, he also saw that with Faith, there would be a need for Devotion and Faithfulness in service. He sees a way forward here which is to return to the ways of Moses where He and they trust God to lead them and so while in his great prayer there is a that key moment of Confession, there is also that keen sense of the ever abiding patience and graciousness of God to allow them to begin afresh and so in the subsequent verses of Nehemiah 1: 9-10, we read,

*"but 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.<sup>10</sup> 'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. '*

Placing their trust in God once more would be the means by which they see theirs and the fortunes of Israel restored. That of course is the key message of Faith in Jesus that restoration with God is something that is not distant, remote or impossible any more but rather the opposite that we can enjoy an intimacy with God never before known.

### **3. Nehemiah was a Man of Great Vision**

While this is a story which reflects the central importance of Prayer along Faithfulness and Devotion, it also speaks to a sense of great Vision - seeing what seems to be impossible as possible. People in business have great vision at times, especially those who are more entrepreneurial in spirit. Everyone was filled with admiration for the Centennial, the late great Captain Tom, whose efforts to walk around the perimeter of his house to raise funds for the much loved British NHS at the height of the Covid Crisis struck a chord with everyone raising millions of pounds in support. He inspired both young and old to dream big and do what seemed nigh impossible.

When preparing for this it struck me that God surprises us by doing the reverse of what we would expect. *"God chose the foolish things of this world to put to shame the wise"* (1 Corinthians 1: 27). If a military commander was to set up a base in a potential combat zone, the first commands they would give would be to "secure the Perimeter" - in other words get the wall built first. At the height of the military success of the legions of Rome, one of the things every legion commander did at the end of a route march was to ensure that a secure palisade was built around the camp before they settled down for the night. That was not what happened here - Zerubbabel first built the Temple years earlier and following on from him, Ezra would come to reinstate and reform of Temple Worship. At the tail end of all this, Nehemiah's role in God's plan was to secure the perimeter and build a wall around the city.

Nehemiah had the vision to see not just what needed to be done but he could also see that with God All things are possible. His life of devout prayer gave him the means to pour out his upsets, his worries and fears while his faithfulness assured God of his Willingness to serve Empowering Nehemiah to fulfil the Vision that God had given to see the fortunes of his beloved people of Israel restored as they rediscover the place of prayer along with devotion and faith. There must surely be a lesson for us all there in these days we are living through. Have a great week.

Calum

*May the Love of God our Father,  
Pour out his blessing  
As He hears our prayers and answers  
them,  
As He feeds us with His Word,  
As we are encouraged in our meeting  
together.*

*And May He take us and use us  
As we seek to serve Him,  
and all whom we come in contact with  
May we go forward in the Power of His  
Spirit  
and in the name of His Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*