

BUILDING 4 GENERATIONS TO COME

How Does God Build?

Nehemiah 3

INTRODUCTION: **God is ever building the Kingdom of God.**

We are building with God as we Build 4 Generations to Come.

Nehemiah and many of the citizens of Jerusalem were building with God as they built the wall of the city.

Chapter 3 of Nehemiah shows us great detail about how God builds.

We began looking at the description of how God builds last week, and we saw that the first characteristic was

I. GOD BUILDS BY CALLING MANY TO JOIN THE WORK.

- A. Just a casual examination of this chapter reveals quickly how many people worked on rebuilding the walls.
- B. People from every walk of life.
- C. People young and old.
- D. People skilled in construction and people who had to be taught that buttering a stone did not require the stuff you use on bread.
- E. People you would expect to be a part of the work, and people who were a big surprise.
- F. I see the same thing every time I walk through our Center of Hope.
While there is a preponderance of Senior Adults because we operate primarily during hours that other adults have paying jobs, you will find working in the Center of Hope, people of every age.
 - Children
 - Teens
 - College Students
 - Young adults
 - Median adults
 - And as I said, Senior adults

If you were to interview each worker, you would discover among those who have joined God in this merciful and evangelistic work, people

- From virtually every profession that you can imagine:
- military officers and enlisted personnel,
- medical doctors and nurses
- custodians and accountants
- secretaries and corporate presidents
- construction workers and decorators.

All working side by side and hand in hand with each and every heart joined with the heart of God to show the love of the Lord Jesus to those who are hurting, while using the opportunity to meet physical needs to share the glorious gospel so that people can have the most important need of their life met.

God bless you! God bless you, every single one of you who give your time, your varied skills and spiritual gifts, who give your energy, portions of your lives to work with God in this wonderful part of the building of His Kingdom.

You are such a good picture of this principle about how God builds. **God calls many to join Him in His work!**

And my prayer is that each of us learns from it. God has many aspects of His work at St. Andrew Baptist. God does not call everyone to work specifically at the Center of Hope, but God does want all of us working in His work somewhere. It may be

- in Lifechange Group
- in the Kid Zone
- as a Greeter
- elsewhere in missions, maybe Baltimore, Brazil, or India
- in evangelism
- with our teens
- in the church office
- with special needs children or adults
- and on and on I could go with the opportunities here at St. Andrew to join God in His work.

Folks, here is the takeaway.

God wants each of us to have a part in the building of His Kingdom, in the building of His church. Have you found your place? It may be more than one place. I am glad God lets me join Him in preaching and teaching, but also in mission work in Texas and Brazil, and in pastoring this church. He does not make me choose, but allows me to be a part of each of these parts of His work, and frankly, I love it!

Have you found your place or your places?

You may be thinking, “Bro Mike, you asked us this last Sunday.” “Why are you asking the same thing again?”

For the same reason the new pastor preached the same sermon three weeks in a row at his new church.

After he preached the same sermon his second Sunday as he preached on the first, people thought, “Well maybe he just got confused.” They decided to just respond with grace.

But when he preached the identical sermon the third week, they sent the Chairman of the Deacons to find out what was going on. The Chairman, trying to be diplomatic asked the young preacher, "Son when do you plan to preach a different sermon?"

To which the pastor responded, "When you folks start doing what I preached in the first one."

So yes, I asked this question before. I have asked it many times through the years I have been your pastor. And many of you have answered, "Yes!" I have found my place, my part, my job as a part of God's Kingdom Building at St. Andrew Baptist Church."

And when I have asked, from time to time, some have said, "No, but I will. I will find out where God can use me, and I will be a part of God's work. I will give my time, and energy, and such skills and gifts as God has invested in me for the work of the Kingdom of God."

But I ask again because I am quite certain that not everybody has said yes. Some of you are still thinking, "That's for somebody else, God bless 'em, but not me!" But I hope you are seeing that such a response is contrary to God's Word and contrary to God's way.

He wants you to be a part of the work. No matter your age, background, abilities, skills, gifts – what you have or do not have. He wants you! If you have not found your place in the work God is doing here at St. Andrew, you can communicate with any of our staff. Our email addresses are on the back of your worship folder. Just send one of us a note.

Now, the second thing that I noticed when I restudied this passage, trying to observe how God builds was this:

II. GOD USES OUR WORK TO STRENGTHEN HIS CHURCH.

Nehemiah 3:8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

A. First we might ask, "Who were Uzziel and Hananiah?"

1. Uzziel was a goldsmith.
2. Hananiah was a perfumer.

Not exactly what you might consider first choice to repair a broken down stone wall and repair wooden gates destroyed by fire!

B. For what are they noted?

Their work fortified Jerusalem!

And so does our work. God sees to it. God makes it happen!

- C. I have started telling you about the things God was teaching me at the first church I pastored in Tulsa, Ok. Folks, God taught me so much in that place, because I had so much to learn.

If you are thinking, "Well Bro. Mike, you still have so much to learn!" you are absolutely right! But brother, you should have known me then!

But God was a gentle and gracious teacher.

And the fact that God can use the strangest parts of our work for Him to build and strengthen His church was a truth that He let me see often.

Sometime after we started a bus ministry and reaching some children, And after the Lord had started growing our church with some young families, And after God blessed our new approach to Vacation Bible School where many, many of our people served the Lord and saw Him bless His work, We began to ponder the question of how we could minister to our community around us in ways not already being done. Our little church was surrounded by several large, growing churches that had strong ministries. They would do big choir outreaches at Christmas and Easter that would draw in many in the community.

Honestly, we just couldn't do that. So we just asked God to show us something we could do to share His message outside the walls of our church with the community around us.

And God gave us an idea.

- D. We called it LIVING NATIVITY.

God gave us the idea of setting up some scenes around our church at Christmas that would depict the coming of our Savior, and the reason that He came. So we decided we would have scenes of

- The annunciation
- The journey to Bethlehem
- The search for lodging complete with a large street scene of Bethlehem
- The birth of Christ in the stable
- The angelic annunciation to the shepherds
- The worship of the wise men
- The resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The entire church got excited about the project, and we divided up the jobs to be done.

- The retired head of operations for American Airlines at the Tulsa airport headed up the construction team.
- A small group of artists and a school principal who did house painting on the side took charge of painting all the sets and scenery.
- A large group of ladies started sewing costumes.
- A couple of us collaborated on a script to tell the story and recorded it.
- Techies reproduced it on custom made 5 minute cassette tapes, state of the art at the time. They also bought a fleet of portable cassette players and added a cigarette lighter attachment so we would not have to buy batteries.
- One enterprising man thought ahead and built a carrying rack for the cassette players to mount on his riding lawn mower to ferry them from the end of the display back to the beginning.
- A small group who lived in the country started trying to round up the animals like some donkeys and sheep.
- It is my experience that in projects like this I often personally end up with the job nobody else wants. My job was to get a camel. How can you have wise men without a camel?
 - My first discovery in trying to find a camel was that the Tulsa Zoo would neither loan nor rent us a camel.
 - I did find a camel that could be rented from a circus that wintered in Hugo, Ok, about a 175 miles or 3 hours away. The only problem was that he was rented as is, where is. In other words, we had to pick him up and return him.
 - A horse trailer was not tall enough. We borrowed a large cattle trailer.
 - One of my retired deacons, JC Fillman had a huge Chrysler with a trailer hitch to pull a heavy camping trailer, so he and I went after the camel on Wednesday morning so we would have him for dress rehearsal Thursday night.
 - We arrived at the circus at 9 a.m. The manager took our \$300 rental check and checked the life insurance we had to buy on the camel. Lloyd's of London was starting to learn my name.
 - Praise God, he got their animal handlers to load him. Three guys, each over 200 pounds led Clyde, that was his name, to the back of the trailer. Clyde took one look at the accommodations and decided he did not want to go. He planted his four fat hooves in the Oklahoma red clay.
 - The lead guy with the rope connected to Clyde's head harness gave Clyde's neck a jerk and pulled him toward the entrance. Clyde, almost casually lifted his head, stretched out his neck, and lifted his 200 pound handler off his feet like he was nothing more than a few dangles on the end of the rope.
 - It took the pros nearly an hour get Clyde in the trailer, and I wondered how us amateurs were going to do it in a couple of weeks

- when we had to bring him back. Oh well, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. We could worry about that in two weeks.
- At last Clyde was in. When the trailer door shut, the handlers hurried off to their other work and left us with Clyde. I looked at Clyde, then at JC, and said, let's go. JC handed me the keys. He said, "You drive."
 - We had not gone 100 yards at 15 miles per hour when the trailer started to weave wildly behind the car. Of course I stopped. We got out, went to the back and found Clyde standing at the very back of this long trailer walking and swaying from side to side. We could see that we were going to have somehow pin the camel in the front quadrant of the trailer if we were going to get this thing back to Tulsa that day.
 - Going about ten miles an hour we went to a lumber yard. We bought 2x4s, nails, a roll of baling wire and a cheap hammer and saw. In their parking lot we built some walls of the 2x4s. I entered the trailer with one of the walls between me and Clyde and backed him into the front corner. We wired it all in place with baling wire, and took off for Tulsa.
 - It actually worked pretty well. We hit the turnpike and I set the cruise control on 55 and we were trucking down the road. The turnpike ends at Henryetta, so we slowed down as we went through town, still about 50 miles from the church.
 - As I drove past Walmart, I felt the trailer give a huge jerk. I looked in my side view mirror. Clyde had pushed to the back of the trailer, stuck his head out, and now staring me in the eyes was the face of a camel. I would have sworn he was smiling.
 - He had obviously pushed the walls down and was loose in the back of the trailer again. I pulled over and we walked to the back to diagnose the problem. It became clear quickly. We had used baling wire but we forgot the duct tape!
 - With no other choice, I got back in the trailer with Clyde, put the walls back up and used a double measure of baling wire to try to keep him in.
 - We made it back to church with Clyde, just in time for Prayer Meeting which I focused on gratitude!
- That was mine and Mr. Fillman's LIVING NATIVITY adventure for the year, but almost every area of work had their own stories of challenge and ultimately victory as God brought His work together for His glory.
 - On Thursday night at dress rehearsal, it all came together, not without its bumps, but it all came together.
 - On Friday night, the parking lot filled with cars of people waiting their turn to go through Tulsa's only LIVING NATIVITY. We did the production, Fri., Sat, and Sun. night for two weeks, 6 to 9 pm every night. At the end, we

had over 6,000 people see and hear the story of our Savior and the good news as to how they could receive the free gift of eternal life.

- And God had used a little church, but one who had a lot of her people, willing to join God in His work of building the Kingdom.
- In so doing, God had not only built the Kingdom, but He had strengthened the church.
- That's what God does when He builds.

GOD USES OUR WORK TO STRENGTHEN HIS CHURCH.

CONCLUSION: All of you who are already working in the ministry and missions of St. Andrew Baptist Church, God is using your work! He is fortifying our church by your efforts. He is strengthening His work through us by making your work effective.

Those of you who are looking for your place to join in. You may think, "What difference will it really make if I agree to smile and greet people in the parking lot as they come to church?"

And you know, in all honesty, I cannot answer that question. I cannot promise you that one day you'll meet a little boy who will be the next Billy Graham and that one day he will say, "You know I really opened my heart to the gospel of Christ because of the friendly greeter I met one Sunday in the parking lot of St. Andrew Baptist Church." I have no idea!

But I know this. God will use your work. God will use it to strengthen our church, and God will use it to build His Kingdom. There is nothing you can do that will have more impact in this world ultimately than joining in God's work.

If God can use a preacher, briefly turned camel keeper, to accomplish His work, He can and will do the same with you.