

Sunday 15th January 2023

Homegroup Questions - Nehemiah 1:1-11. 'Do I really care?'

A brief bit of history to set the context for Nehemiah....!

Just before the start of Nehemiah, the 10 northern tribes had become the kingdom of Israel and the 2 southern tribes had become the kingdom of Judah. Do have a read of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles to see what happened to those 2 kingdoms, but basically.....

- *the northern kingdom was ruled by a bunch of kings who ignored God and led the people of Israel away from God*
- *and the southern kingdom, although the kings were mostly good, also had some kings who led the people of Judah away from God.*

As a result, God judged both of the kingdoms and allowed them to be carried away by their enemies.

- *the northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722BC*
- *and in 586BC, after Jerusalem was ransacked, the people were carried off into exile by the Babylonians.*

But then the Persian empire overtook the Babylonian empire and the King of Persia, King Cyrus, decreed that the exiles could return and rebuild their land, their cities and temple.

So the book of Ezra (just before Nehemiah in our Bibles) tells the story of the first couple of waves of people returning. But it didn't go all that well, which brings us to the start of Nehemiah.

As I said, its a very brief bit of history!!

1. What do you see about the nature and character of God in this brief historical overview?

I mentioned three recurring themes that will appear in our sermon series,

Building
Battling
Becoming

2. What do these themes mean to you and can you share with the group some examples from our life, either past or current?

Nehemiah was in a great place, being Cupbearer to the King. He had privileged access to the King, he had influence and authority and he lived in the palace in great comfort.

3. When he heard about the state of Jerusalem, why didn't he just think, *'It's not my problem'*?
4. When we see or hear of some sort of injustice or suffering, what might cause us to think *'It's not my problem'*?

It can be very hard to acknowledge that we might feel like that about a situation of injustice or suffering... we probably know that God calls us to love and care for others.

5. If we don't do anything about the situation, does that mean we think *'it's not my problem'*? Equally, there will always be injustice or suffering around us, so how can we respond to every situation of injustice or suffering? Where is the 'middle ground'?

I summarised Nehemiah's response by saying he:-

- asked about the situation
- he mourned
- he fasted
- he prayed
- he took action

6. Not every injustice or suffering that we hear about needs us to be the one who responds, but how would you decide whether it is a situation that you need to respond to?
7. Bearing in mind Nehemiah's response, how might you go about responding?

Spend some time, as a group, praying for situations of injustice or suffering that you know about and discuss how you might, as a group or as individuals, seek to respond.