



10-22-17 Sermon Discussion Guide "Mounting Opposition"



Context

Our Christian Education theme for year is "Game On!" We are encouraging people to be fully engaged participants in the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. Throughout this year, the second Sunday of each month will be our "Game On Sundays." We'll explore how we play this game as Christians and what we need in order to play it well. This fall, in the remaining weeks, we are going through the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. This book describes events that take place in the Persian Empire and in Jerusalem during the 5th century BC. The nation of Israel was under the rule of the Persians. Nehemiah was an Israelite servant of the king, Artaxerxes. This story is important for us today because it shows the incredible impact one person can have when God gives them a passionate calling. In these coming weeks we'll explore the calling of Nehemiah and how God used him to change history.

Checking In

Since the last time your group has met, how have each of you experienced God at work? What have you celebrated? What have you mourned?

Introduction

Think of a time when you felt God calling you to do something, but you got distracted. What distracted you- was it some outside force or something on the inside? For example, a boss who isn't understanding can be distracting if you feel called to pursue a new endeavor in the workplace (external force). Another example, your exhaustion can be distracting as you try to get up 45 minutes early to pray and read your Bible (internal force).

Discussing the Text – Nehemiah 4 and 5

1. In Nehemiah 4:1-9 we see ridicule and intimidation being used to thwart the building of the wall. These are external forces. What are external forces that keep you from completing a task? Do you engage with those external forces? Nehemiah didn't engage with those who were taunting him and threatening him.
2. In Nehemiah 4:10-5:5 we see discouragement, fear, and fighting amongst the Jewish people over inequalities. These are internal forces. What are internal forces that keep you from completing a task?
3. Through all of this, we see Nehemiah stay focused on the rebuilding efforts. He doesn't engage with the enemy or stop to put together an army. He briefly pauses the work to deal with the inequalities among the Jewish people in chapter 5, but then they all get back to work. Nehemiah 5:16 says "Indeed, I devoted myself to the work on this wall."
4. We also see him praying in 4:4, 4:9, 5:13 (praise), and 5:19.

So what?

1. Do you need to be more focused on the task in front of you that God has called you to do? Do you get easily distracted?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Ask God to give you perseverance this week – strength to continue doing what you have been called to do. Ask for focus on the task at hand, not to be distracted by anything.