

Advance: Our Church in the Next Century
The Church's Opportunity-Maximizing our Potential

Introduction: Next week I will conclude this series of messages

1. We will all be asked to make a commitment, a pledge to invest in the next century of ministry here at Glad Tidings
2. Following the service here we will move over to the SMC and break ground for our new SMC and the current remodel

Advance Fund: (explain this fund as a one time and perpetual fund)-Goal of \$750,000

1. Pay for SMC project first
2. Sanctuary chairs and parking lot
3. Start-up funds for Dunkirk
4. Seed money for Missions projects (Morocco pastors \$24,000 to train in two years 30 Muslim converts to pastor house churches and the Dingman Re-Made Center)
Note: We want to be able to do this when there is a need. Love to exceed the \$750K

Giving by God's People, for Kingdom work has always been God's way

- Moses and the Tabernacle
- David and the Temple Solomon would build
- Paul to the Corinthian church

This is about OPPORTUNITY!

Glad Tidings is standing on the brink of unprecedented opportunity

- God has blessed us over the last 99 years (and 19) and grown from 150 to over 700
- Chance to expand our ministry to young people in our community
- Chance to train pastors and leaders for church plants and our growing outreaches as well as other pastors in the region who have never been trained
- Chance to plant GT Dunkirk

All about Opportunity-this is ours

Last week—Recognizing the Opportunity

- A. There is a season (time...zeman) for everything=a set or an appointed time
 - a. Greek Septuagint=kairos-a fixed or definite point in time
 - b. These we call opportunities

- c. Our time is now...the opportunity for GT to ADVANCE is before us

B. There are consequences for missing an opportunity

1. Esther-for such a time as this
2. A nation in peril
3. There was (and will be) risk
4. Fear will challenge us
5. But we must act and not miss our opportunity
6. Bathed in prayer we must advance
7. Defining moment (as you pray) how will God use you to enable GT to Advance into the next century of ministry

Today-Maximizing the Potential of Our Opportunity

Nehemiah did just that—he maximized the potential of his opportunity

I. **Nehemiah's Opportunity** (in the text we read)

- A. For several decades the Jewish people had been exiled in Babylon (now controlled by Persia) and their holy city, Jerusalem was in ruins
- B. Some had returned home under the Persian control and had re-inhabited the home land.
- C. Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the Persian king and enquired of Hanani (a Jew who had made a trip to Jerusalem) about the conditions
- D. Report-city was just like it had been left, walls torn down, trash everywhere, weeds grown up, nothing at all to be proud of and this was the City of God
- E. He wept in the presence of the King who enquired (He had never been sad before)
- F. King asked what he wanted to do
- G. Asked for a leave of absence and he went to Jerusalem to view the conditions and ultimately rebuild
- H. Great opposition, strife, sacrifice, and danger...but it was an opportunity he would not pass up.
 1. Remember...always risk
 2. Always fear
 3. Always danger
 4. But we must recognize our opportunity and act
- I. The story of Nehemiah is a story of opportunity taken. The walls rebuilt, the enemy silenced, the people invigorated, and the city restored.
- J. Nehemiah maximized this opportunity powerfully.

“When we are still measuring our sacrifice we have not yet seen His worth.”

II. The Potential that Nehemiah's Opportunity Provided

A. A chance to give hope to a defeated people whose walls, once a symbol of pride and strength, were now lying in ruins.

1. Walls fortified the city
2. It showed that they were strong and NOT vulnerable
3. The reaction of Nehemiah to Hanani's news was one of deep sadness and hopelessness (sat down and wept and mourned many days...1:4)

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces."" Psalms 122:6-7 NKJV

"Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit" Proverbs 25:28

4. The rebuilding of the walls would re-establish national pride and hope for the people.

B. A chance to make use of and restore that which has previously been considered useless.

Note the accusation of Sanballat

"But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish— stones that are burned?" Nehemiah 4:1-2 NKJV

1. No one thought these burned over stones could ever be good for anything
2. Sanballat made fun of the people but Nehemiah was determined to use them
3. Marred, hard to find, buried beneath the rubbish
4. These would be used to build a Great Wall

C. A chance to win a victory as a people, a body.

1. Had been defeated as a people
2. Shamed as a people
3. Could not rebuild unless a people worked together

“And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. At the same time I also said to the people, “Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day.” So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.” Nehemiah 4:15-23 NKJV

“So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.” Nehemiah 4:6 NKJV

- a. As you read the text in chapter three, each family took a part
 - b. From gate to gate until all the wall was repaired
 - c. Every one had responsibility
4. This was a great and powerful victory for the PEOPLE!

D. A chance to re-prioritize the essential

1. The enemies tried to bring the work to a halt through harassment
2. Nehemiah refused to give in or compromise

“Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono.” But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” Nehemiah 6:1-3 NKJV

3. When the wall was finished they gathered for the Word of God to be proclaimed to them.

“Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

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Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiab, Urijah, Hilkiab, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiab, Misrael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground." Nehemiah 8:1-6 NKJV

- a. This priority had been gone since captivity
- b. This opportunity seized afforded them an opportunity to re-establish the essential priorities

E. A chance to silence their enemy and glorify their God

1. Since the work began the enemy was attacking them
2. They had conspired to stop the work
3. Threats, accusations, invites to compromise
4. They all failed and the wall continues

Hear the report:

"So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God." Nehemiah 6:15-16 NKJV

III. How do we maximize our potential?

NOTE: Next week we will ask you to commit to the next century at GT with your prayer, your service, and your financial sacrifice. Not for a human cause but one much greater.

- This is an amazing opportunity
- It will allow expansion of ministry to our students (and provide usable and functional space for education and many other events)
- It will allow us to plant Dunkirk GT and others in the future
- It will allow us to respond to the needs of our missionaries on the field so that can do what God has called them to do
- If you have not seen the presentation, still can tonight
- If we take this opportunity we are maximizing our potential greatly as the people of God

A. Can give hope to defeated and desperate people

1. Youth (Josh's sermon on the 2nd, the youth culture)
2. Dunkirk which needs a strong Gospel influence

B. Can see lives restored that one were thought burned over or used up (burned over stones)

C. Can experience the joy of accomplishing this moment together (so built WE this wall)

D. Can establish afresh what is essential and crucial (NorthPoint, SMC for youth)

E. Can soundly defeat the enemy in East Central Indiana

1. Touch young people
2. Train leaders
3. Plant a Gospel witness in a hurting community

Conclusion: This all began when Nehemiah herd the condition of his city and his people and God stirred his heart...an opportunity set before him and he maximized it.

What if he had not?

- The city still in ruins
- The people distraught
- The enemy would run amok
- The opportunity lost

We can ill-afford to miss this opportunity

Mark Twain made the sad remark that "I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one."

John Broadus said, "Opportunity is like a fleet horse that pauses for a moment at one's side. If you fail to mount him in that moment, you can hear the clatter of his hoofs down the corridors of time. That opportunity is gone forever."

A farmer's clock ran amuck one morning and struck seventeen. The man of the house jumped up and ran all over the place, saying, "Get up, it's later than it ever has been before!" It is later than it ever has been by God's eternal timepiece. It is later than you think.

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Larry Moyer—*Decide now what you want written on your tombstone, then live your life backward from there. Life is short and ought to be taken seriously. Decide now how you'd like to be remembered, then live your life accordingly. Do you want your tombstone to read, "He was the head of his corporation," or, "She was the best in her field"? Or would you rather it reflect an important contribution you've made to life?... If, at the end of your life, you want to say "I did," instead of "I wish," alter your course today. (31 days to contagious living: a daily devotional guide on modeling Christ to others)*

ILLUSTRATION: *Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel awoke one morning and read his own obituary in the local newspaper. It read, "Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before, and he died a very rich man." It was Alfred's older brother who had died; a newspaper reporter had bungled the epitaph. But that account had a tremendous impact on Nobel, who decided he wanted to be remembered for something different. As a result, he initiated the Nobel Prize to reward individuals who foster peace.*

An opportunity before us: Let's Maximize Our Potential