

Raising Prophetic Nehemiah's

The Altar, the Temple, the City

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he found more than broken walls, he found broken lives. Our communities are filled with broken people – people that have no direction or purpose.

Today many people respond to the frail and degrading circumstances in our towns and cities with these kind of responses - Everything is a mess....! Education, crime, food prices, health and poverty everywhere! If I could I would.....! - Someone ought to do something! – What is the government doing? What are the municipalities doing? What is the Church doing? Where are the Christians?

It is so easy to scrutinise and complain about every situation that is affecting society negatively. It is easy to talk about and analyse the problems that we are faced with in the world. Discussions may illuminate the problems and in some ways find solutions but it will not remove the problems if action is not taken. We need to DO something about the problems. The safety and enjoyment that we encounter in holy huddles will just not cut it.

A benchmark Scripture in my personal life concerning ministry is something that Paul said to the Romans. He wrote that he dare not speak of anything that has not been accomplished in him in word and deed through Jesus Christ so that he may bring obedience to the Gentiles. I have been personally blessed by this Scripture and in the light of it; I share some insights of prophetic process and principles that I have experienced in being part of and seeing a number of communities ignited through God's prophetic utterances especially in Luanshya Zambia which changed from poverty to prosperity. The process is prophetically biblical, the leading is divinely God.

The condition of our community should not be ignored

On earth as in heaven – Spiritual life manifested - It must start with this desire

Our father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What an incredible privilege we are given to pray that God's will that is in heaven be done on earth. How great an insurance we are given that when Jesus taught us to pray this way that it could and would happen – earth manifesting God's will. How great is the promise that if we ask our Father for bread that He will not give us a stone or if we ask for a fish that He will not give us a snake. Can we see the lives of others rather than the importance of our own? Do we feel overwhelmed and hopeless yet prophetically encouraged to do something?

Difficult narrow road of the few – do we see this road in our community and life?

Many Christian people living and experiencing the surrounding sin and appalling circumstances in their communities have become desensitised to the gravity of the evil that is at work and resident amongst them. In many ways this is the status quo of the life many live in, and they feel that they just need to co-exist in the pool of swirling garbage that is around them. Few give thought that Almighty God has given us the ability through Jesus Christ to bring change for the good to His glory in our families, neighbourhoods, villages and cities.

I love the prophetic word that Jeremiah gave to the Israelites when they were in captivity. The Lord said to them that they should build houses and reside in them; they should plant gardens and eat the fruit, marry and have children, seek the peace of the city and pray for its peace and if they did this – they would have peace. Now this could not have been easy to hear or act upon.

Change is possible and no it will not be easy. Jesus Himself said that the road to destruction is broad and many find it but narrow and DIFFICULT is the road to life, small is its gate and FEW find it. Difficult and few seems to sum up the current situation we find ourselves in and will continue to find ourselves in our entire life as we go about establishing the kingdom of our God on earth.

To the few that are walking on the difficult road, and being vessels through whom God is establishing His kingdom on the earth - your efforts are not in vain. To those that are pondering about this journey I encourage you to calculate the cost and to jump right into the purpose that Christ has for you. God's Word is an unchanging Word which means that until Jesus returns difficult will remain difficult and few will remain few. In the midst of few workers and difficult situations Peter, in the letter he wrote, strongly encourages us to make our call and election sure.

A life of sacrifice – is this characteristic in our community and life?

We as the children of the Most High need to return to our Father and wait upon Him with pure and contrite hearts. A spirit of humility needs to permeate us so that the Lord is drawn to us, and that the kingdom of God that is within us, will become manifest around us.

Paul beseeched the Church in Rome that they should lay down their lives as living sacrifices which would be their reasonable act of worship. He continued to tell them that they should not conform to the pattern of this world but that they should be transformed through the renewing of their minds and that only then would they know the good and perfect and pleasing will of God. We cannot expect any heavenly action to happen if we do not allow ourselves to be bound to the altar as a living sacrifice. Unto Him alone do we give ourselves.

The church of Jesus Christ in many communities has resorted mainly to social care to alleviate some of the pain within the community – this is good – as a matter of fact it is very good and should be strongly encouraged. These benevolent acts reveal the true love and mercy of our good God to people that do not know Him. Now as good and true to the Word of God these actions are, there is far more to the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven – remember – there is no need for social concerns in heaven. There is a dynamic about the kingdom of God that no-one lacks anything. This lifestyle will demand selflessness and sacrifice beyond anything we may be currently experiencing. Please note that “no-one lacking” relates to those that have been translated into the kingdom of God, not those that are in the world - even though the world too benefits from God’s eternal mercy. We can do ALL things through Christ Jesus and God shall supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God’s wisdom – is this in our community and life?

Paul told the church in Ephesus that it was God’s intent that His manifold wisdom becomes known through the church to the principalities and powers of the air. God’s wisdom is defined by James when he said that the wisdom that comes from above is firstly pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. Can we receive and believe that these products of wisdom from above are available now to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven? Is it possible that our communities can reflect the light of this truth to all the darkness? I believe.....Yes! – For not only have I read it – I have witnessed it in two communities that I have had the privilege to labour in with my brothers and sisters. In one community Luanshya in Zambia I witnessed God’s hand in a greater way than in the second community, Henley on Klip, but in both communities change came through the guidance of God’s people desiring to see his kingdom become manifest in their midst by responding to the Lords prophetic voice. Even though these communities still engage in battle against the evil one and have some ongoing problems, they have a strong testimony of God’s kingdom manifesting through His people in their midst.

Prayer – the first prophetic response to the chaos of the community

Nehemiah’s reality was saturated with prayer and so should ours – Pray the desire

It all began for Nehemiah when he heard from some Jews a report that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were in disrepair. This news deeply disturbed Nehemiah and a burden was placed upon him to repair the gates and walls of Jerusalem. He gave up his comfortable and wealthy position in Persia and returned to his fractured homeland to gather the people to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall. In the face of opposition, which is always the case when we engage in the work of our Father, he used wise defence measures to care for the people and keep the project moving. We too in the establishing and accomplishing of God’s kingdom in our broken communities must pray, persevere and sacrifice, as did Nehemiah.

To fulfil the burden that was within Nehemiah he relied strongly on prayer. Prayer is a fundamental aspect of seeing the kingdom of God manifest on earth. Prayer was a foundational requirement in Nehemiah's life to fulfil the huge mandate that was placed on him. Without continuous consultation with the Architect not much would have happened. Unless the Lord builds the house the labourer labours in vain. The book of Nehemiah unveils seven instances where he prayed concerning different issues.

- 1) After receiving the news that Jerusalem's walls were in ruins Nehemiah recognised God's holiness and confessed his sin then asked God for help and favour to approach the king.
- 2) While Nehemiah had a conversation with the king he prayed unto God and asked for His help - putting the expected results in God's hands.
- 3) When he was ridiculed and his life made difficult by Tobiah and Sanballat he prayed to God to decide what to do with them which showed that Nehemiah put his trust in God while taking necessary precautions.
- 4) After threats of being attacked by the enemy he prayed unto the Lord and said that they were in His hands and that they would keep the weapons ready if it was necessary to use them.
- 5) When he had responded to the threats he asked the Lord in prayer to strengthen him which meant he relied on God for his emotional and mental stability.
- 6) In reflection concerning the action of the enemy Nehemiah asked God to deal with their evil plans which took away his desire to take revenge and to trust God for His justice.
- 7) Nehemiah prayed when he reflected on his own efforts that God would remember him; which kept clear in Nehemiah's own thoughts his motives for action.

In understanding these realities we need to pour out our heart to God concerning His will being done on earth as it is in heaven. We need to be specific in our requests and be prophetically informed and aligned. We may never take any matter concerning the kingdom of God into our own hands; and we need to trust Him impeccably.

Nehemiah did not work in isolation; he worked amongst many with Zerubbabel and Ezra to restore the community with purpose and direction. God will always preserve His people; He will continue to build His people. He is faithful and just and will make His promises come true. He is the architect and has prepared a home for His people. We can enjoy some of those benefits now if we build according to His design.

It all starts with prayer. You do not have to wonder why God has been prompting His people all over the world to labour before Him in prayer now more than ever before.

Does our prophetic focus need to be sharpened? Prayer always exposes us to the bigger picture

God has not stopped speaking to us concerning His church. One of the problems that we have is that we have become congregational focussed as opposed to kingdom focussed. We are meeting and service orientated to a greater extent than community and beyond focussed.

The Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah very strongly in rebuking the shepherds – Israel’s watchmen – for lacking knowledge and understanding. He goes as far as likening them to dogs that are mute and loving to sleep. He further said that He had a problem with the shepherds because they were looking to their own territory for their own gain. (Isaiah 56v10-11)

Is our satisfaction and contentment our meeting territory, or is it something greater? Do we only have the desire for God’s visitation in our meetings or do we have a desire to create a habitation in our community – our city? Is this possible?

The bigger picture

In Chapter 61 in the first few verses of the Book of Isaiah we read of four different phases in the progression of God’s plan for His people and purpose:

- 1) Preaching the good news with the anointing
- 2) Healing and setting the captives free
- 3) Established as oaks of righteousness the planting of the Lord
- 4) Rebuilding ancient ruins and renewing the ruined cities

The first two points speaks of salvation and making disciples, the third point speaks about a matured called and elected saint and the final point speaks of purpose.

This very much gets endorsed by Paul when he wrote to the Church in Ephesus and said that Jesus gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints to do the work of ministry.

The word equip is translated from the Greek word Katartismos. Generally most folk would relate the word equip to that of teach – nothing wrong with that – but there is so much more to this beautiful word. In the classical Greek, the compound word “Katartismos” had three interesting meanings and uses. Let us look at it in the light of Isaiah 61. Firstly the classical Greek conveyed the idea of responsibility to thoroughly prepare someone for any given task or purpose. The second meaning was that of preparing an army for battle and thirdly and this really excites me, is that it means setting in order a city which had been torn apart by factions and schisms. The process of restoring a city to its original beauty would be called “Katartismos”

A verse that stirs me is something that Paul said to Titus, “The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order what was lacking and appoint elders in every city” Amazing – he did not say church – he said city.

Are we listening and weighing up what the prophets are saying?

Paul wrote to the Church in Thessalonica and told them that they are not to despise prophecies or as some translations would put it, not to treat prophecy with contempt. What he stated before mentioning to not despise prophecy was that we are not to quench the Spirit. It was obvious that the Church of Thessalonica was guilty of both. To quench carries the idea of dampening the flame of the Holy Spirit fire, which is poured out to purify, enlighten, warm, melt and consume.

Quenching can be either by an inadequate chilled response or an exaggerated disruptive response.

Yes sadly today we are faced with much fuzzy prophetic garbage and false prophets, but that does not give us the right to throw the baby out with the bath water. One cannot allow oneself to be driven by the negative –yes there are false prophets – but there are also true prophets. May our Father help us never to reject His true Prophets! We should always “test everything” checking the prophetic words spoken to see if they are biblically endorsed. We are on dangerous ground if we scoff a person who speaks the truth. Instead we should carefully check out what people say accepting what is true and rejecting what is false.

I have found this reaction to prophecy – folk love to talk about the prophetic past – they get really excited about the prophetic future – but they resist the prophetic present. Why is that? I believe that the true prophetic demands an action – it demands my attention – and it demands my life to be encouraged and inconvenienced one way or another.

The prophetic word is the future invading the present. The purpose of it is to prepare ourselves for the ongoing moves of God. If we fail to take cognisance of the word spoken we will fail to be ready and miss the opportunities that the Lord desires for His glory in our generation.

There are generally two kinds of prophetic words, personal prophecy and directional prophecy for His Church. Personal prophecy is generally accepted but directional prophecy concerning the Church is generally received with scepticism. The problem that we have with directional informative prophecy for the Church at large is that local churches use the prophetic word to endorse their own local work rather than weighing it in the light of Spiritual unity in what God wants to do in the city or nation.

I would like at this point to make something perfectly clear – we are NOT called to follow prophecies – we are called to follow Jesus. If we follow the prophecy which could be tainted with the nature of the fallen man we in for a lot of frustration and hardship. If we try to

implement the prophetic word in our own strength we will create disillusionment and heart ache. Prophecies are sign posts on the journey. When we follow Jesus the prophetic word if it comes to pass will confirm and encourage us that we are on the correct path.

What are the prophets saying in your city and nation? What are we doing with what we have heard? Are the true tested apostles testing and implementing what God is saying? All that I have written up to this point and what I continue to write on these pages is in response to the prophetic words spoken about the redemptive purpose concerning the Church in Cape Town and God's purpose for Africa.

History repeats itself – It has to, because no one listens.

Communities that have been affected by the presence of God have started with a combination of prophetic vision and prayer. God's kingdom is all about His purpose – not our comfort.

I remember in Luanshya that when the prophetic word was spoken that God was going to pour out His glory there, it was weighed tested and taken seriously. A large number of local churches came together as one in the community and submitted itself under apostolic guidance. They began labouring in prayer for years. The prayers spread from there to the point that a national prayer network was formed by a man with a strong apostolic anointing Aaron Mwale. I had the privilege of sharing and walking with Aaron for eight years in which the Lord taught me patiently how to prepare and equip the church in a community to receive His wonderful habitation.

Unity – the second prophetic response in dealing with a fallen community

Prayer does one thing – it cultivates unity

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head. Running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments, it is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion, for where the Lord commanded the blessing – life forevermore.

When Paul wrote to the Church in Ephesus, the first thing that he mentioned concerning the saints need to be equipped was that they all come to the unity of the faith. Now this can only be fulfilled if we have an understanding that we cannot create the unity of the Spirit, we can only keep the unity of the Spirit. You cannot enter a room that you are already seated in. We cannot create unity – we have got it if we like it or not. The problem is that we do not understand this unity because our understanding based on our opinions and prejudices disrupts and agitates the unity that we already have. Our opinions and prejudices, which are not founded in Christ, feed off our pride and this in turn cannot break the unity but it certainly makes life a little unpleasant in keeping the unity and gives the impression that there is no unity. Oh how the Lord puts up with us with long suffering.

Jesus prayed unto the His Father that we should be one in Him as He is one in the Father for two reasons, and you have the freedom to go and read it in John 17, the first reason was that the world may believe that He was sent by the Father and the second being that we would be made perfect in one. Now sadly neither of these two attributes is clearly seen – we are not seeing the world believing that Jesus was sent by the Father the way it could be and we are not seeing a lot of perfection happening amongst the saints. I do not believe for a second that we do not have unity – I truly believe we do have unity, but we have created so much smoke with all our dogmatic opinions and preferences that the unity that is hidden in the smoke cannot be seen for what it is by the world nor by the church.

What are the factors that are disrupting the unity we have?

The unity that is spoken of in the scriptures is going to demand a radical rethink on our understanding of unity. Currently the church has an expression that is defined by its doctrine, programmes, buildings and leaders. The current methodology of how we do church is already been challenged by numerous sectors and possibly for very good reason. There is a holy dissatisfaction being stirred up amongst believers that are earnest about their walk with God and are starting to question the biblical validity of what they are doing. The increase of exposure through postings on the internet and various books has not made things easier for anyone that wants to hold onto unbiblical practises.

God is in the refining business and He does not excuse our naivety or stubborn immovability on issues that are not in Him. Two thousand odd years down the line we find ourselves yearning for just a small percentage of what we read in the book of acts but we are not prepared to change. No change – same results. The words of a dying church, “We have never done it that way”. We cannot insist on any unity of opinion and we cannot insist on any unity of experience. We can only insist on the unity of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and who has made Christ one in us.

Some areas that need to be challenged to “uncloud” the smoke we created around our unity for the prophetic voice to be heard and fulfilled?

Doctrine

We need to revisit our doctrines. Incorrect doctrine did not drive Jesus away no matter what you may think. Our Lord is not as fickle as we are – if that were the case how do we explain His rebuke and love to the Church in Pergamos in the Book of Revelation that taught the doctrine of Balaam and doctrine of the Nicolaitans. All Jesus said to them was that they should repent or He would come against them with the sword of His mouth. It was an issue of repentance. If we humble ourselves we would have no problem dealing with incorrect doctrine. When we accept that the Lord is aware of incorrect doctrine and will deal with it – it should not be an issue for why we cannot work together. Jesus is our common denominator. I would like to make it clear that this relates to regenerated born-again

believers and not those that have doctrines that reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the fact that He is God. Doctrine cannot and may not disrupt our unity we have in the community. God is never confused about His word – but we are sometimes way off base.

Sectarian leadership mentality

We need to challenge sectarian thinking around the area of leadership. Now once again for the sake of clarity, I am not talking about sects that reject Jesus as the Messiah and the fact that He is God – I am talking about born-again Spirit filled believers. Sectarian evidence is subtle in this case but yet it is disruptive to the unity of the Spirit. Paul had to deal with this in the Church of Corinth. He pleaded with the church concerning this issue that they all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among them and that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The example Paul used was that there were those that were saying, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos” or “I am of Cephas” or “I am of Christ”. The issue was not about who was being followed but rather how they were being followed and the thinking behind it. You may think to yourself – “What is wrong with saying that I am of Christ?” Well – nothing but yet everything – in the context of the Scripture Paul used this example, was to illustrate the fact that those that were saying this were making the assumption that others were not of Christ. The same went for those that mentioned the name of those that they were following – “If you not following this leader then you are not with it”. Did Paul not say to the Church in Rome, “Who are you to judge a servant who belongs to another master? That servant stands or falls according to His Lord, not according to you. He will be made to stand; for the Lord has power to make him stand.” We cannot allow who we follow to disrupt the corporate unity we have in our community.

One city/town Church

I wonder if you have ever noticed something in the Scriptures concerning the Church. The Church was never named or mentioned by denomination or a specific name. Every time the Church was mentioned it was mentioned by the name of the town they lived in. Paul directed his letters to the saints in a specific town; the Church in Corinth, the Church in Ephesus, the church in Philippi or the Church in Colosse. When the Lord spoke to His Church in Revelation, He referred to them as Church of Ephesus, Church in Smyrna, Church in Pergamos, Church in Thyatira, Church in Sardis and Church of the Laodiceans. The Church was never viewed by denominationalism or free, but rather as THE CHURCH OF..... If we had to look at this in the context of today it would be, the Church in Cape Town, The Church in Johannesburg, the Church in New York, the Church in Shanghai, the Church in London and the Church in Adelaide etc. I think you get the point. What we have done within our cities and communities is to remove the one city church or town and replaced it with various denominations that feed the approval of our prejudice rather than our gifting and oneness. In other words – we should be separated only by geography not as a people. We cannot

allow our differences created by denominationalism or free disrupt our unity we have within our geographical areas. How wonderful it would be to see different gatherings of the saints in a city fulfilling their redemptive purposes according to gifting and perspective rather than the divisiveness of doctrine and prejudice.

A Perfect Bride.....Maranatha

The most glorious prophetically declared moment that we all long for is the return of Jesus. Every prophetic word and action in every town and city is for this glorious day. How wonderfully awesome it would be to hear God's church without spot, wrinkle or blemish declare as one "Maranatha".

May our lives remain on the altar of the cross, May our resurrected lives built together display the glory of God as His temple and may our towns and cities reflect something of a prophetic New Jerusalem.....

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come"Revelation22v17