It's Time to Get Sick and Tired!

Nehemiah 1

Nehemiah. Cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. About 445 b.c. Esther was Artaxerxes’ stepmother. Ezra wrote Nehemiah. Two governorships. 1st 12 chapters = 1 year.

Remember Earl Pitts' rants on the radio? "You know what makes me sick?"

A decent question: **what is it that makes you sick?**
A better question: **what is it that breaks your heart?**

- About your culture... inequality? injustice? oppression?
- About your community... addiction? family issues? lostness?
- About your life... mediocrity? status quo?

We're starting a series today, based on the life of Nehemiah, about what to do about the things that make us sick and tired – **How to Have a Breakthrough**

It's a series about vision. It's a series about leadership. But more importantly, it's a series about depending on God to break some chains and change the situation for us as we rise up to the challenges!

God is looking for some people who will get sick and tired of the brokenness in the world around them, AND, who will DO something.
Nehemiah 1:1-10 NLT

These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes’ reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, “Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.” 4 When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. 5 Then I said, 6 “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! 7 We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses. 8 “Please remember what you told your servant Moses: ‘If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. 9 But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.’ 10 “The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. 11 O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.” In those days I was the king’s cup-bearer.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE SICK AND TIRED...

1. Spend a moment in mourning.
"When I heard this, I wept... I mourned..."

Get bothered! Get a burden!

**Acts 17:16 MSG**
The longer Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, the angrier he got—all those idols! The city was a junkyard of idols.

**Acts 17:16 ESV**
Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

### 2. Spend some days in fasting and prayer.

"...for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven."

Prayer is DOING something.
Fasting is DOING something.
These aren't just religious rituals.
These are the things God calls on us to do in order to call on him!

I'm asking us to spend a concentrated time in fasting and prayer, as a church family, for our people, our community, our nation, our world. **21 days.** We're not going to be picky about how you fast.

Fasting demonstrates dependence on God. It shows that we recognize the heaviness of the moment enough to put down our forks and pay attention to God, and what God wants to do.
3. Continually practice repentance.

"I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! We have sinned terribly..."

It's never enough to recognize the brokenness around us. That leads to self-righteousness and bitterness. We must look at the brokenness within us. We must confess our part of the problem.

4. Beg God for a breakthrough!!

"Please grant me success today..."

I want US to be successful.
I wand YOU to be successful!
Success, as God defines it, starts with taking up a cross.

What do you need to get sick and tired of today?
What do you need to pray for success in?
Did you see the story about the big crowd of people who showed up to tour an old, abandoned nuclear reactor in rural Northwest Arkansas? Yep. A big crowd of people were dying to get in...

Nuclear reactors are filled with potential energy. It's not hurting anyone or doing any damage to anything, apparently. I believe that the church today is similar. We're filled with potential but we're not a threat. We're not doing enough damage to the gates of hell yet.

YOU have the potential to be like Jesus and your story can change a life! But chances are, you probably don't believe that. I want us to be inspired by Nehemiah's example...

**Nehemiah 2**

1 Early the following spring, in the month of Nisan, during the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was serving the king his wine. I had never before appeared sad in his presence. 2 So the king asked me, "Why are you looking so sad? You don't look sick to me. You must be deeply troubled." Then I was terrified, 3 but I replied, "Long live the king! How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been destroyed by fire." 4 The king asked, "Well, how can I help you?" With a prayer to the God of heaven, 5 I replied, “If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.” 6 The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked, “How long will you be gone? When will you return?” After I told him how long I would be gone, the king agreed to my request. 7 I also said to the king, “If it please the king, let me have letters addressed to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, instructing them to let me travel safely through their territories on my way to Judah. 8 And please give me a letter addressed to Asaph, the manager of the king's forest, instructing him to give me timber. I will need it to make beams for the gates of the Temple fortress, for the city walls, and for a house for myself.” And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me... 18 Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!” So they began the good work.
1. The abundant life Jesus promised lies before you, ready to be lived!

2. The biggest barrier between you and your breakthrough is... YOU!

"... Then I was terrified!"

- Unconfessed sin has you crippled (remember last week's point about repentance?)
- Unfounded fears have you caged.

3. Breakthrough starts to happen when we overcome our fear with faith.

Nehemiah ASKS!

**Luke 11:9-10 NLT**

And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

And he didn't just ask, he asked some more!

4. While you're waiting on God to fix it all, God is waiting on you to get started! You're going to be part of your own breakthrough.

Nehemiah heads out, confronts enemies, surveys the land, casts the vision, and rallies the people. He was a busy guy!

You need to **pray**, yes. And you also need to **act**!

Now, what is it that you believe God is calling you to **DO** in response to what he is willing to do in, around, and through you?
It's Time to Get Connected
Nehemiah 3

The most valuable resource you have isn't money. It isn't talent or charisma.

The most valuable resource you possess is your relationships.

We've developed a burden...
We've decided to seize the moment and take some next steps...

But now is when we get derailed, unless...

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Nehemiah 2:11-18 NLT

11 So I arrived in Jerusalem. Three days later, 12 I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. 13 After dark I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal’s Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. 14 Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but my donkey couldn’t get through the rubble. 15 So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate. 16 The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the Jewish leaders—the priests, the nobles, the officials, or anyone else in the administration. 17 But now I said to them, “You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!” 18 Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!” So they began the good work.
3 Reasons to GET CONNECTED:

1. There is always too much to do alone. (2:11-15)

When you've developed a burden for all the brokenness around you...
And out of that burden, you've cultivated a vision for how to get it done...
Then things get overwhelming.

Life is too big and too scary to try to do it all alone.

2. You were meant to do life with others. (2:16-18)

Colossians 3:15 CEV
Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace.

I need several overlapping circles of people.
- I need my whole church (whether that's 30, 300, or 3,000)
- I need my small group (usually 8 to 12 or so)
- I need my smaller group (my 2 or 3 who can ask me anything)

Connection always works two ways.

3. Together, we can change the world. (3:1-32)

We're not going to read chapter three out loud together because it's 32 verses of ancient Jewish names, but that doesn't mean it isn't important. Skim it. See how many times you see phrases such as “next to him...” and then “next to him...” and then “next to him...”

If last week's message was all about seizing the moment,
this week's is about turning the moment into a movement!
A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church!

In other words, our church ought to be all about five things:

- Loving God (worship)
- Loving others (ministry)
- Sharing Jesus (evangelism)
- Baptizing people (fellowship)
- Growing spiritually (discipleship)

You belong IN this community, even before you believe WITH this community.

WE WANT TO BE YOUR PEOPLE!
Some of the greatest advice I've ever been given...

**If you're going to become what God wants you to become, you're going to have to walk through a fire somewhere.**

He went on to say,

**You can run from it this time, but you'll have to walk through it eventually, IF you want to become what God wants you to become.**

When you begin to experience breakthrough, **hell gets mad.**

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**If you want to experience breakthrough, you're in for a fight!**

You've gotta learn to **fight the right battles** with the **right weapons**.

**YOUR THREE BIGGEST ENEMIES...**

- The **world** around you  
  - False values and belief-systems.  
  - People who have been hurt.

- The **flesh** within you  
  - Your own weaknesses  
  - Your sinful desires

- The **enemy** hunting you

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**1 Peter 5:8 NLT**

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

In Nehemiah's story, they take on different forms, and I think you'll identify with what he faced. Let's learn how to fight like Nehemiah...
1. When you're unfairly criticized, remember who you are.

Nehemiah 2:18-20 NLT

Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!” So they began the good work. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. “What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” they asked. I replied, “The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem.”

Or better yet, remember WHOSE you are!

2. When the enemy attacks, you fight and you keep going.

Nehemiah 4:6-9 NLT

At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

• We work.
• We pray.
• We protect ourselves.

3. When you feel discouraged, you remember the Lord.

Nehemiah 4:10-14 NLT

Then the people of Judah began to complain, “The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.” Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, “Before they know what’s happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work.” The Jews
who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, “They will come from all directions and attack us!” So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows. Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, “Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!”

You remember how good God is, how powerful he is, and how much he loves and defends his beloved children.

**4. When you see others attacked, fight for them.**

*Nehemiah 5:9-12 NLT*

Then I pressed further, “What you are doing is not right! Should you not walk in the fear of our God in order to avoid being mocked by enemy nations? I myself, as well as my brothers and my workers, have been lending the people money and grain, but now let us stop this business of charging interest. You must restore their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and homes to them this very day. And repay the interest you charged when you lent them money, grain, new wine, and olive oil.” They replied, “We will give back everything and demand nothing more from the people. We will do as you say.”

**5. When you are tempted, remember your purpose!**

*Nehemiah 6:1-9 NLT*

Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me, so I replied by sending this message to them: “I am engaged in a great work, so I can’t come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?”... Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply... So I continued the work with even greater determination.

Are you willing to fight for the freedom to live out God's eternal purposes?
REARVIEW:
• We developed a holy discontent with the brokenness in and around us.
• We decided to do something about it.
• We committed to getting connected to others.
• We started preparing for the battles we'll face along the way.

NOW:

It's {always} time to acknowledge the goodness of God.

In fact, it's ALWAYS time to acknowledge the goodness of God. This is worship.
• When you have experienced breakthrough... worship.
• When you are waiting on your breakthrough... worship.
• When you wonder why it didn't happen... worship.

Worship is something we have to be intentional about.
Worship doesn't happen by accident.

Nehemiah 8:1-8 NLT

In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, 1 all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey. 2 So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. 3 He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion... 5 When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet. 6 Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.
Worship involves actively hearing from God.

God is always willing to speak truth into our lives, but we are responsible to create the capacity for hearing it.

When we open our Bibles.
When we show up at church.
When we gather with our small group.
When we talk about spiritual things at home.

and then...

Worship involves responding to what we learn about God.

Nehemiah 8:9-12
9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, “Don’t mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God.” For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. 10 And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!” 11 And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush! Don’t weep! For this is a sacred day.” 12 So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them.

Worship invokes both humility and excitement.
Genuine worship both highlights and heals our brokenness.

Worship honors God.
Worship changes me.
Worship is a witness to a watching world.

What brokenness do you need to acknowledge before God?
What is God saying to you that deserves a response of your heart?