

Every Square Inch

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

- [0 : 0 0] Let's just bowing our heads, remain standing. Father, as we come now to, we've heard your word written, and now, Father, we come to look at it again more carefully and listen to it more carefully.
- Father, you know how easy it is for our thoughts to flit away and flit away and flit away, and you know how hard it is, Father, for us to hear your word and realize how it's speaking to us, us directly.
- And so we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would do a gentle but powerful work in our lives to bring your word home to us in light of who Jesus is and what he has done for us on the cross.
- And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Homes and houses are in the news a lot, and they have been for the last couple of years.
- It's a great concern for a lot of younger people and a lot of new Canadians as to whether they'll ever be able to own a home of their own, given how expensive they are.
- [1 : 1 1] And it's just a great concern. And I think part of the reason it's... I mean, it's always a concern, of course, because there's something about owning your own house or your own condo that's yours, that has a sense of real security to it.
- And it's also because, in many ways, we feel like we live in an insecure world. And I think we feel we're in an insecure world because we don't have any roots. At least a lot of people in our culture, I'm not saying everyone here in this room don't have roots.
- Many of us, in fact, hopefully our roots are sort of in the gospel. But a lot of our culture, we feel unrooted, uprooted, rootless. A lot in our culture actually sort of think they can find their roots by, you know, making up stories or rituals or try to find the roots in themselves.
- But, you know, many people don't think they'll have a job with the same employer for a long time. They worry about whether their marriages will last, whether they'll even get married.
- And so there's a lot of insecurity connected to not having roots and wanting a home, something that you can own. And the text that we're looking at today speaks directly into this need for a home and a need to have roots.
- [2 : 3 4] So if you would turn in your Bibles, it would be a great help to me if you turned in your Bibles and to yourselves, if you turned in your Bibles to Nehemiah, chapter 2.
- And Victory began reading at verse 11, but we're going to begin reading at verse 9. Nehemiah, chapter 2, verse 9. And what's just happened prior to this is Nehemiah has a very prestigious position in the court of the emperor or the king of Persia, mighty empire.
- Persia, up until I think a few decades ago, Iran was called Persia. So very old, longstanding, powerful empire. He had a very high position in the court.
- He's Jewish as well. He hears a tale from people who've come back from Jerusalem of the state of the city, how it's all in ruins, how the people are sort of in a bit of weakness and confusion, and there's no walls.

And it really cuts him to his heart, and he fasts and he prays, and he senses that God is putting on his heart to approach the emperor, the king, to see if the king would allow him to go back and rebuild the walls and build a fortress and have proper gates.

[3 : 53] And he fasts and prays for four months, and then the time comes when God opens a door, and he goes and he speaks to the king, and there's a great miracle that the king actually says yes. And what Nehemiah did required a lot of courage because he would have known, Nehemiah, that it was this same king that had earlier stopped a rebuilding effort of the walls and caused the work to be put into rubble again and to burn the wood.

And Nehemiah speaks to Artaxerxes, and Artaxerxes says, yes, you can go back and do this. So this is what happens next. So if you have your Bibles, here's verse 9.

So he leaves. Between verse 8 and verse 9, they don't tell you about how he gets organized or how long it took him to leave. It just now tells you about him coming into the region. It goes like this. Then I came to the governors of the province beyond the river and gave them the king's letters.

Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Now just sort of pause here. It's translated very well when it says, it displeased them greatly. But it goes even beyond that.

[5 : 23] As we're going to see in the text, they despise the Jewish people. And the word in the original Hebrew is that it's implying this great displeasure is connected with maliciousness and the hint and the promise of violence.

That's how deeply these people, they don't know anything about what Nehemiah is going to do. They just know that he's Jewish, that he's coming here to do something to help the Jewish people. And immediately, unbidden, out of them pours this emotional, visceral dislike and hatred of anything to do that's going to benefit the Jewish people.

You know, as I've talked about over the weeks and over the years, the Bible doesn't have any doctrine of race. There's just human beings who are made in the image of God. But the Bible very deeply addresses the issue of racism and murderous prejudice.

One of the problems sometimes with people who interpret the book of Nehemiah is they miss this aspect. You might remember, I've talked to you about it before, in Ezra chapter 4, which is all the same book as Nehemiah, there's this little aside.

And in the aside, it just paints a picture of over 100 years and intergenerational hatred, an intergenerational prejudice. And here Nehemiah is coming in almost exactly 100 years after the first decree.

[7 : 01] And he comes into a situation where it's still there and it's still strong and it's just there as soon as it comes to the fore. And that's going to be the context throughout the entire book.

Why it is that Nehemiah is going to do the things he does, how he goes about and does it, it's in this context of this great, great displeasure, this hatred.

And it's key to notice, notice what it says here about how they're the governors of the land. Or maybe it comes up a little bit later on that it mentions that they're the governors.

It's a little bit later that it mentions it. But it's actually really important to understand this, that it's a little bit like if you've watched movies set in the south, you know, in rural Alabama or Mississippi or something like that during the 50s at the height of segregation, that great evil of segregation in the American south.

And if you've watched some movies and maybe somebody from the north comes to do something to help the local population, the African Americans, and the locals are terrible and the locals are bad, and he goes to complain to the police or to the judge or the prosecutor, not realizing at first that the cop is with the Ku Klux Klan, the judge is with the Ku Klux Klan, the prosecutor is with the Ku Klux Klan.

[8 : 22] So how do you go to them for help? They're all not only part of the problem, they are the problem. And they have the power and they have the authority.

And it's in this context that Nehemiah has to function. So what happens next?

The next bit's actually a bit boring and a little bit odd, but the boring bit, which I'll explain to you, is actually going to be very significant for the whole arc of the story. Let's see what it says.

Verses 11 and following. So I went to Jerusalem, right? He goes first to the governors and all. And now he goes to Jerusalem, verse 11, and was there for three days.

Then I arose in the night, and I and a few men with me, and I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.

[9 : 23] I went out by night, by the valley gate, to the dragon spring, and to the dung gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down, and its gates had been destroyed by fire.

Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered the valley gate and so returned.

And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, that's the people, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were doing the work. He hadn't told them his plans.

So here's the thing. All of these things are sort of incomprehensible to us, but if you ever go to Jerusalem and you sort of look at it a bit of a higher level, it's sort of there's a valley, then a hill, then a valley, then a hill, then a valley.

And back when, before the wall had been destroyed, you had walls that encompassed the valley, the hill, the valley, the hill, and the valley, and all around it.

[10 : 33] So it was quite a big wall. And one of the things that, so what's going on here is that Nehemiah, he obviously came having a bit of a plan, but he'd never been to Jerusalem.

And he's like a good consultant. He's like a good planner. He has an idea that he knows he wants to build the wall, but he has to see what's really happening on the ground. And so he does it secretly at night, whether it's a full moon and a cloudless night, and he can see, or he can see well enough.

He doesn't have to know all the little itsy-bitsy details. He can see very, very clearly. And obviously, during the three days and this other time, he's made a decision that all of the other attempts that there have probably been over the hundred years to deal with the wall, they've probably tried to deal with the whole wall, and most of the city is empty.

And what they've just described here is that he's now come up to the plan that he's going to move the wall to the top of the hill on this side, and he's just going to fortify one hill.

That's all he's going to do. He's going to leave the bulk of the city unwalled. But he's going to take a smaller job, a doable job, as part of his plan. Now, once again, it's important to understand that the reason he's doing this at night is because he's picked up very quickly the deep, settled hatred of those in authority.

[11 : 54] So he can't do this publicly. He has to do it secretly, under cover of darkness. So now he sees what's going on with the wall.

He's had his ideas about what he's going to do, and he's probably had to change them all in light of what's actually in front of him. He might not have realized that there was a valley, a hill, a valley, a hill, a valley, and that the original wall encompassed all of it.

He might be looking at it, and if you ever found his notes, you might say, well, no wonder they couldn't build the wall or it's going to take them too long. That's just way too big for our resources and for our people, and most of it's all, it's all just empty anyway, that whole other section.

So he comes up with a different plan. And so this next bit, there's this very helpful word, but for scholars, it's an unhelpful word because they'd like to have it be more precise.

Look what happens in verse 17. It says this, then I said to them, just before I go, so here's the thing about that's frustrating, then means the next thing we're going to be told about.

[12 : 57] But it does, then doesn't mean that it meant like that morning. We don't know whether he took a week, two weeks, three weeks, a month. There's a period of time. And after he's had this period of time, then he speaks, verse 17.

Then I said to them, you see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer suffer derision.

This is the big cry, the leadership cry of Nehemiah. It's time to build. Let's arise and build. And it continues, verse 18, and I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good and also of the words that the king had spoken to me.

And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work. Now, just one little aside here. It's an important aside.

One of the things, sort of under the pressure of a type of a belief in process and technology and all that, we tend to have a sense that if God's hand is upon us, we won't have enemies.

[14 : 08] But one of the important lessons of the book of Nehemiah is God's hand can be upon you and you still might have enemies. God's hand being upon you doesn't mean you will no longer have enemies.

God's hand being upon you means you can stand in the face of your enemies and build in the midst of your enemies. That's what it means. But here's the thing.

Actually, here. I think it's going to be on the screen. Just put your fingers in the Bible here and turn for a moment to Proverbs 26, verses 4 to 5. Proverbs 26, verses 4 to 5.

And this little two-verse bit of Proverbs 26 sort of captures an issue with all of the Proverbs. So Proverbs 26, verse 4 says, Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

Good piece of advice. Don't answer a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

[15 : 12] In other words, you have to answer the fool because you don't want him to think he's wise. So one moment, those are contradictory pieces of advice. What's going on? Well, in a sense, what God is saying is exactly.

In all of the Proverbs, the issue is that you need to have the wise man or the wise woman has to, in a sense, be so attentive to God and so attentive to the real world and so attentive to the people in front of him that he or she has a sense about when the right proverb applies.

It's a little bit like in using secular Proverbs. We might say, look before you leap. But in another context, we might say, he who hesitates is lost. Well, okay, which is it?

Do it right away or take some time to look, right? We might say, too many cooks spoil the broth or many hands make light work.

Well, which is it? Well, it just depends on the specific time. So this is very important to this. You see, the book of Nehemiah is justly famous for its lessons on leadership, its lessons on courage, its reminder that God is big, and it's rightly remembered for this rousing cry, let us build.

[16 : 24] And I have to confess that especially this week, I have been wondering if we as a church are in a Nehemiah 2 moment. Like, is it part of God's providence that we are reading this text?

Like, is it the case that God is saying to us, it's time to arise and get a church building? Like, let's do that. Or there's other things to build.

Like, it's time to really take seriously planting more churches in the city of Ottawa. Let's pray into it. It's time to take the training of clergy and future church leaders more seriously. Let's build up Ryle.

You know, it's time to really take seriously the need to bring the gospel to the universities. It's time to build a university. Like, I don't know. Is God calling us that? Is that this time? But, you know, here's the thing.

So this really is a thing that we need to take seriously, but you also have to take seriously a very different story in Kings and Chronicles that God, that David wants to build the temple and God says no.

[17 : 28] So which moment are we in? Well, that's where wisdom comes. That's where prayer comes. You can't just take this and then always say it means that we have to arise and build. No, but we need to take it seriously.

But part of the wisdom that God wants us to have by being close to him, by being attentive to the meaning of the Holy Spirit, by looking at the world, is to know and say to ourselves, you know what?

I think we're in a Nehemiah 2 moment in this area, in this area. And we need to arise and build. I don't know. I think one of the things, a word of all this passage for us is to pray into that issue.

Whether it's the church or some other type of thing, is God calling us to build something at this point in time in our church's history. And one of the things we might say, well, one moment, that George, God can't be calling us to do this because it's impossible.

Well, you see, this is where the hand of our God being upon them is so important. I mentioned last week that Nehemiah was almost definitely a eunuch.

[18 : 32] It means he was castrated. And in terms of Jewish culture and law at that time, and even whether or not he could be in the temple and his place in leadership, it was very questionable.

I mean, in a very real physical way, he was a broken man. And he confessed his sins. And these people are weak and they're not powerful.

And that's part of the story is that God doesn't want us to look at our resources but who he is and whether he's calling us to do something that only he can do. not because we are great and powerful but because we are the servants of a great and powerful God.

And as long as we look to our own resources, then it's the devil speaking to us. I'm not saying we should be completely foolish. But we need to look at God and ask what he's calling us to do.

Now, I just want to say one other thing. I'm not going to talk about it very long but it's important in terms of what I've just said. It's also important to understand the overarching story of Ezra and Nehemiah.

[19 : 44] If you could put up the first point. The wall was spilt to serve the beautiful vision. The beautiful vision does not serve the wall. I talked about that a couple of weeks ago about this beautiful vision in the midst of people who believed myths and stories that legitimized incest and legitimized the males using their rapacious sexuality on any woman that they felt like in a culture where babies would be served and burned to Moloch where every human being was viewed as a slave.

There's this overarching, profound, beautiful vision of the Bible about every human being being made in the image of God that both men and women and children have an integrity and a dignity just by virtue of being human that's bestowed by God and not the state that God wants friends and children not slaves and there's this profound, beautiful vision and it's important if we think we're in a Nehemiah 2 moment is that the gospel doesn't serve buildings.

Buildings should serve the gospel. That's our beautiful vision. So, there's another thing which we get the first hint of that's going to be very important throughout the entire rest of the book of Nehemiah and it's important for us to recognize as well.

You know, sometimes we have people who say they're with us but they're not with us, they're really against us and they plot and conspire against us and one of the things that's going to be coming very clear as the book proceeds is that Nehemiah is going to have problems leading because he has moles.

He has people who are aligned with the people who hate the Jews and give them information. Look what happens in verse 19. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and now a new person, Geshem the Arab, heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, what is this, what, sorry, and what is this thing that you are doing?

[22 : 03] Are you rebelling against the king? Now, once again, these are very good words but we have to understand that in the original language it's even a deeper, deeper.

They despise these people who are Jewish. They despise them. They look down their nose at them and they publicly point out everything about them that from their twisted world and way of seeing things that makes them look inferior and petty and small and worthless.

That's what jeering means at them. And the other thing, and this is why it's, this is part of the reason why this text is so important to us for us to meditate upon especially in our day and age where there's a problem ongoing of cancelling where there is public denunciation and hatred and lies because you see they just make up a lie.

Notice that again? What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king? Let me tell you friends, figuring out the truth is hard. Arguing for the truth is hard.

It's way easier just to make up a lie. lie. It's always easier just to lie on one level. I'm not saying it's the right thing.

[23 : 37] I'm just saying on one level, that's how a lot of people think. Like, oh gosh, like why to actually try to listen well and, you know, spend some time doing research and listen to both sides and try to come up with an argument and try to sort out the truth and be willing to change your mind.

Why do all of that when you can just make up a whole pile of lies? And here's another thing. Jeering implies they're yelling this in public. They're public. They're proud of the fact that they despise these people.

They're not embarrassed about it. They're not ashamed about it. They think they're right about it. They call them names. And here's the thing. Lies yell. The truth can be whispered.

The truth can be spoken plainly and calmly. But lies yell. In fact, when faced with arguments, the best solution is to yell louder. It's to yell louder.

Nothing has changed much in 2,400 years. If you could put up the point just very briefly, this is one of the things about the text. The gospel, when I say the gospel, I mean who Jesus is, what he said and did, what he accomplished on the cross, and what he promises to those who put their trust in him.

[24 : 56] That's the gospel. The gospel forms you to be a person of the truth who rejects lies. I don't know if you noticed, it jumped out at me when I was reading the John text.

What does it say when Jesus says, I'm going to send the helper? Talking about the Holy Spirit, and he calls the Spirit the Spirit of truth. If God pours his Holy Spirit into us, he's pouring his Holy Spirit into us for us to be people who know the truth, love the truth, seek the truth.

We'll change our minds to stay with the truth, who want to learn more of the truth, and who recognize lies and reject them.

So how does Nehemiah respond? Remember I said, this is one of the things, he responds quietly, not by jeering and yelling, he responds quietly.

Look what he says in verse 20. Then I replied to them, the God of heaven will make us prosper, and we as servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.

[26 : 10] Then I replied to them, the God of heaven will make us prosper, and we as servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right to claim in Jerusalem. Basically he says, God is big.

Yes, we're small. We're nobodies. But that's fine, because God is big. And yes, we are nobodies, but we're his servants. We're the servants of the great God of heaven.

And by the way, you are not with him, so we are not with you. You are not him, so we are not with you. Now, okay, I mean the big question is, there's two sort of big questions.

One of them, why didn't they just move? Right? I mean, isn't that what a lot of us would do if we somehow bought a house and we discovered that all of our neighbors hated us? We'd sell the house and move to another house.

Like, there's other places to live. Like, why stay? Why stay with people who hate you? And why does it matter? In fact, it's very interesting. God in his providence, a person who's a friend of mine, saw me preparing my sermon in my local coffee shop and said, are you preparing your sermon?

[27 : 22] What's it about? And it's always interesting when questions like that happen, because now I'm trying to think very quickly, how do I make this sermon relevant to him? Like, why does it matter?

Why would it matter to him? I mean, other than the fact that it matters to him and it should matter to all Canadians to recognize the power of the lie. And I think all Canadians, at least on one level, would say they want to be people of the truth, even if they, in fact, would rather just make up and invent lies rather than engaging with the truth.

But why don't they just move? Like, why stay there? There's lots of other land. So, to understand it, I think it's going to be on the screen.

If you go to Nehemiah 1, verse 9. Did I tell you Nehemiah 1, 9 or Proverbs 1, 9? Eh? Okay, I sent you the wrong text because I had a mental block.

So, it's not going to be on the screen. You just have to listen to it or look in your Bibles. Look what happens in Nehemiah 1, 9. This is part of, this is part of Nehemiah's prayer and it's something that's really important to understand in terms of everything that happens in Nehemiah.

[28 : 35] But it's also something really important to understand about your longing for a home and for roots. He says this, but if you return to me, this is, he's saying what God has said.

He's saying, God has said, if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the outermost parts of the heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.

The place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there. If you could put up the point, all of the Old Testament and what we know from the New Testament makes this big claim.

There is no square inch of reality that the triune God does not say, mine. The way he taught that is on one hand, he taught it because you even see at the beginning of Genesis chapter 1 and 2 that he's created the whole world, he's made the whole world to be the home for human beings.

You see later on in the Psalms, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and all of this, but partly how he taught them was not by teaching them just the big idea, but by trying to get them to understand it in one little concrete area.

[30 : 00] Why did he want to do it in stages like this? I don't know. We have to ask God when we get to heaven why he wanted to do it in stages, but that's what he's saying. He's saying, you know, you live in a world where kings claim the land and gods and idols claim the land and I want people to understand that in this piece of land this is mine.

This is mine. It's not the kings, it's not the gods, it's not even yours, it's mine. One of the reasons why we do not have land that we need to, that there's no type of Christian land is that one of the things we understand from the gospel is that the good news of Jesus is to go to every people group throughout the planet.

In fact, I hope I haven't forgotten one. I did a very quick thing. In this congregation, part of those who call Church of the Messiah their church home, people were born, who are part of our congregation, were born in Canada, the United States, Mexico, England, Italy, China, Taiwan, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Sudan, Ethiopia, India, Syria, Indonesia, Barbados, Korea, and Australia.

And if I missed your, and that's just where you were born. If we added first generation Canadians, I would be one. I'm from Northern Ireland, my parents. Louise, I could have a Northern Irish passport.

Louise could have a Polish passport. She's a first generation Canadian. And if we went around for first generation Canadians, there would be a lot more. But that's part of what Jesus does.

[31 : 45] Jesus' salvation is a universal salvation that's offered. And we are to go to all the world. And part of what God is doing is he wants all the world to come to know him.

And he wants us to begin to know that all the world is his. If you could put up the next point, God says, mine, so you will have a home. See, that's what he wanted for those people.

He wanted them, it wasn't just so much that he claimed it to be mine as if it was a power play. But, you see, where God is, that is where our true home is.

Where God is, that is where our true home is. And in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, we see that God intended that the entire world would be our home, that we would understand that he's made it for us to live in.

And that we're to develop gardens and cities and art and song and culture and business and mold it, all knowing that we are with him.

[32 : 52] And when we are with him and reconcile to him, then we are home. You know, Augustine said, God has made us for himself and our hearts are restless till they rest in him. And it's a very true and profound thing.

So, why a wall? I have to, I have to come wrap this up. It's part of the deep formation of the Bible. So, there's not much you can do about this.

Other than educate and catechize your kids and pray for your kids. But you know, if kids watch cartoons, apart from the really woke ones, but even the, just the ones that we think are very safe, like the old Disney ones or something like that, what all those old Disney films and all those old cartoons do is they form you to not pray.

They form you to live in a world where God does not exist. Nobody in the cartoons praise. Nobody thinks they should to read the Bible.

Nobody thinks they need to trust in a Savior. Their goals are fine. They can accomplish them by themselves with some humor and some courage. And they teach some valuable moral lessons.

[34 : 04] I'm not saying that people shouldn't watch them, but it forms you to believe that you live in a world that God does not exist. stories like this form you to understand that the real world matters.

Our friends here who are from India can tell you that in India Hinduism, in a sense, doesn't concern itself with history. It has myths and rituals.

The goal is a type of private illumination that will move you to break the spell of reincarnation and reincarnation to merge with God.

And if you have that, that it's just something private, it means in a sense it doesn't matter about the poor. It doesn't matter about industry. It doesn't matter about art. It doesn't matter about education because these things are all just illusion.

They're all things to pass away. But the Bible at a very deep level is forming us that you need to care for the wall. The wall is going to serve the beautiful vision. The wall is going to help to protect them from being robbed and being beaten and being raped.

[35 : 15] It's going to become a place that can become a platform to do all of these other things. It's why it isn't just the case that I can just present you some ancient myth about Jesus but that Jesus isn't just some ancient myth but that Jesus actually came and lived amongst us and walked amongst us.

He walked the streets of Jerusalem. He died upon a cross. He died upon a cross and historians can pick he died on the cross on one of two days because it happened in history and he rose from the dead and scholars can say it was on one of two days that he rose from the dead and history matters and the body matters and the physical matters and that's why it is that Christians this is what I shared with my Jewish friend who asked me about this yesterday I said that's why Christians and Jews especially Christians no offense wherever we go we've set up hospitals we set up schools we care for the poor the body matters culture matters it's why we have art it's why we have poetry and song and hymns our physical existence matters and it's all part of this forming of what we see by the fact that the wall has to be built and the wall serves us you know

I'm going to read it's not going to be up there I'm going to read Isaiah chapter 53 verse just in closing Isaiah chapter 53 as I bring this to a close Isaiah 53 3-6 remember I said that this is a story about Nehemiah leading a despised people in the face of their despisers who are in positions of authority how he works to build the wall and I was very mindful this week of Isaiah 53 3-6 he was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows we esteemed him stricken smitten by God and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all

Jesus was despised so that the despised and the despisers could repent and be loved by the triune God he was despised so that the despised and the despisers could repent and be loved by the triune God you could put up the point the triune God is real so he acts in real history so he can be really known and Jesus the next point is forming the real you to follow him and make him known in the real world Jesus is forming the real you to follow him and make him known in the real world you know in a sense there's many people in our culture who think that to come to a church like this and believe the things that we believe is completely and utterly foolish and there's many people who think that it's evil follow Jesus anyway make a difference in the city anyway share the gospel anyway build anyway and if you and I think that there's a way of behaving so that people will though people who think that way about us will not like us dislike us less

I just want to say to you for people who hate us hate the things that we stand for before this service they had 19 reasons after this they'll have 21 don't think about it people hate you for being a Christian love them anyway share the gospel anyway pray for them anyway do good anyway build anyway and in all things pray for them and if you're here and you don't know where you are with Jesus if you're here and you don't know where you are with Jesus it is so worth it because he loves the real you he wants to fit the real you for a real life with him in this real world and at the end of the end of the end there is a real new heaven and new earth you will have a resurrection body and be with him you know it's very interesting the Bible begins with God having human beings in a garden in the center of the world if you go back afterwards and you read

[40 : 25] Revelation chapter 21 and 22 it ends with a city and in the center of the city is a garden in all things that's what God is making us for to live with others under his rule to have homes in him that are rooted and deep and thick and have hope please stand let's bow our heads in prayer Father we we ask that you bring this story home to us in a real and deep way and we thank you Father that you claim every single bit of who we are and that when Jesus died on the cross he died for every single bit of who we are and you want us to give every single bit of who we are to you and Father you are taking every single bit of who we are and you are fitting us for resurrection bodies in a new heaven and a new earth where we will dwell with you and with others for all eternity and and so Father we give you thanks and praise that you claim all of us that Jesus died for all of us and we ask that your Holy Spirit would so move in our lives that all of us that all of makes us us that we would recognize that it's it's to serve you and to give back to you and that you will only make us more whole whether it's with our money whether it's with our sexuality whether it's with our time our plan our creativity our intelligence our thinking

Father we give you thanks and praise that you claim it all and have redeemed it all and help us to live under your rule and under your gentle hand making it all for you giving it all to you and we ask this in the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior and therefore we ask more thank you thank you thank you