

Awaken: Community

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 February 2017

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, and if you have your Bibles with you, let's turn together to the book of Nehemiah, Old Testament book. If you go to the book of Psalms and turn left, three books later you get to Nehemiah, and we will be in Nehemiah chapter 12.

And we're going to be beginning a new series talking about corporate worship, worshiping as the body of Christ together. And I believe, as we know, worship is a good thing. But if we're not careful, our idea and our definition of worship can get a little bit skewed. Sometimes culture, sometimes contemporary fads can come in and take our eyes off of really what is the most important.

And to see what the Bible has to say about our worshiping God and the Word of God is going to be the foundation for what we're going to see that what God calls worship and what we're supposed to be involved in worship.

What I want us to do from the very beginning is dive into Nehemiah chapter 12 as we look at God's people worshiping him. But I want to lay some foundations before we begin.

[1 : 15] I want us to see these foundations as balancing worship. As we look to see that worship really is balanced. And sometimes there are two components that might be held in tension together as we look at this.

I want us to see the first one as we balance out worship and see that worship is an honor, but it's also a command.

It's an honor. We have to remember this morning as we begin talking about worship that it's only because of the grace and the mercy of our God that we're able to be here this morning. And it's because of the cross of Jesus Christ that changes our lives and that we're able to be here together unified and worshiping our Heavenly Father.

So it's an honor to come before God and to worship him. But at the same time, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, there are imperatives commanding us to worship.

Commanding God's people to worship him. It's not an optional thing. God says do it. And as a matter of fact, even nature says to do it.

[2 : 25] We are commanded to worship him. It's an honor, but it's also a command. The second thing that we see that balances worship is worship is biblically prescribed, but it's also culturally flexible.

And what I mean by that first half is worship is biblically prescribed. God in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament shows us that worship is important.

And he shows us the important elements, really the non-negotiables about worship and what worship really is. And we're going to dive into God's Word to see throughout this series what God prescribes about worship.

But just like in the Old Testament, there were times when God's people were doing it just as he prescribed. But he said it stinks. Now, how can that be?

How can people worshiping exactly the way God said to worship as far as the way they did it, and God says your worship stinks, is because God prescribes worship to be something that is organic, something that comes from within us, and our hearts are involved in it.

[3 : 37] It's not routine. It's not just something we do because we're supposed to do it. And it's not something we do just to impress somebody else who thinks we're worshiping. God says it needs to be done from the heart, and that's what we're going to really see.

But it's also culturally flexible. And I believe by the time we get to the New Testament, we realize that there's really not much that God says about how to do worship.

Really because the gospel was going into so many different cultures. I don't think God wanted his worship to be put in a box that one culture would say, you know what, that's just not natural for us. That's just not natural because we do this when we worship, and God says, cool, that's awesome, because I want your heart in it. I don't want to know whether you're just kneeling or standing or clapping or this or that or the other.

You know what, those things are things that are coming out of our culture, coming out of our heart, the things that are important is we worship God as the creator, we worship Jesus Christ as the savior of mankind, and it comes from our heart.

[4 : 47] Really the New Testament is a missions book. It's a book about missions where God's people, his disciples, his followers, go out into the world and reach the world for Jesus Christ.

And because of that, worship is going to look different in every different culture. And God is okay with that. And I believe that's why the prescribing of the way we worship is all but missing.

It's not there in the New Testament. All that God gives us in the New Testament are the non-negotiables, the fundamentals and the things that we ought to be doing. Otherwise, he really doesn't give much direction because he leaves it up to the local church.

He leaves it up to the local culture. And as we worship corporately together, what we realize is that most of what we as Americans consider worship is more on the cultural side than on the biblical side.

Because you think about it. What do we consider worship? Worship. Sitting in pews. Sitting in chairs. Coming to a building. All facing the front.

[5 : 59] People on the platform. Leading music. Reading God's word. And preaching the word. Well, what is that? It's all cultural. God's word being preached can go across cultures.

People worshipping don't have to worship facing forward. We can worship in a circle. We can worship backwards. We can worship upside down. You know what? All of these things tend to be cultural.

And we associate worship with what we are used to. We associate worship with what we've been raised to believe worship is. And in all the culture who does it differently, we tend to think, oh, they're not worshipping right.

Why? Because they're not worshipping our American conservative way. And so we think that they're not worshipping right because they're not worshipping according to our cultural view of worship.

So it's biblically prescribed, but it's culturally flexible. Next we see that worship is the fuel, but it's also the goal of our mission. You know, since the beginning of this year, we've been talking about the mission of God's people.

[7 : 01] And it's to make disciples, to go out into the world and make disciples. But what fuels this mission is the glory of God. What fuels our mission to go out and make disciples is because God is such an awesome God.

He deserves our worship. And we want everyone to be with us one day when we stand before the throne of God saying, God, you are awesome. You are wonderful. And we bow before the Lord Jesus Christ.

We want as many of our friends. We want all of our friends. We want all of our family. We want all of our neighbors. We want all of our strangers to be before God, worshipping him. And that is the goal of our worship.

The goal of our worship is one day to stand before God with multitude upon multitude upon multitude, bowing before God, worshipping him. So not only is the glory of God the fuel of this mission, but it's also the goal of this mission.

And then next, what we see as we balance this is worship involves those inside the church, but it affects those outside the church. What we're going to see over the next five weeks is that worship in scripture primarily involves believers in Jesus Christ.

[8 : 12] Because we're the ones who worship God. But what we will see throughout our time together is, especially we look in 1 Corinthians 14 and other places where we see the worship that we engage in together as a body will affect those outside the church.

Because even the apostle Paul talks about those who are unbelievers who come into the church, they can be affected by our worship. And they will say, God is an awesome God. Look at these people. They're worshipping him.

He deserves honor. He deserves glory. He's full of glory. And he deserves our praise. I want in on this. So our worship is primarily for those in the body of Christ, but it affects those outside the church as well.

And then we see that worship is personal, but it's also corporate. Worship is personal. That means you can worship God anywhere you are.

You can worship God in the lake, on the lake, in a boat, hopefully catching fish. Preferably not on Sunday morning at 10, 15 when we're gathered together, right?

[9 : 24] But the thing is, we can worship God anywhere. You can worship God while you're vacuuming the carpet. Now, most guys, if your spouse asks you to vacuum, you're probably not worshipping God at that point, but you should be, right?

Because you have a carpet to vacuum. My point is, we can worship God anywhere. And what we're going to see in Nehemiah chapter 12 is there were a bunch of individuals, but they were doing it together.

They were doing it together as a big family of God. So it's also corporate. And we're going to see here, got your Bibles, we're in Nehemiah chapter number 12.

We're going to begin in verse number 27, but a little bit of context before we begin. The temple was existing.

The Babylonians come around 597 to 586. We see the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem. They destroy. The temple is destroyed.

[10 : 25] God's people are taken into exile. And then what happens years later, they're gathered together. They come back and they rebuild the temple.

That's the book of Ezra. But they're worshipping in the temple. The walls are in shambles. The rocks and the stones are all piled up on one another. And it looks terrible.

It's in a shambles. And then what we see in Nehemiah, or as we go through this book, the first seven chapters of the book, they're rebuilding the walls.

We get to chapter number 8. We see a picture of God's people in the middle of the temple worshipping God. But then we come to the climax in Nehemiah chapter 12, and the walls are rebuilt. They're finished. And we see God's people begin to praise Him and worship God for what He's done among them. So picture this scene as I begin in verse number 27 of Nehemiah 12.

[11 : 27] And we're going to read all the way down to verse 47. So hold on. Hold on to your seats. Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought out the Levites in all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps.

And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophethites, from the house of Gilgal, from the fields of Geba to Asmaveth. For the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites purified themselves and purified the people, the gates and the wall. So I brought, this is Nehemiah speaking, so I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs.

One went to the right hand on the wall toward the refuse gate. After them went Hoshiah and half of the leaders of Judah and Azariah, Ezra, Meshulam, Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, and some of the priests, sons with trumpets, Zechariah, the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mathaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zichor, the sons of Asaph and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azariel, Millalai, Galalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani with the musical instruments of David, the man of God.

And Ezra the scribe went before them by the fountain gate. In front of them, they went up the stairs of the city of David on the stairway of the wall beyond the house of David as far as the water gate eastward.

[13 : 10] Now, the other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall going past the tower of the ovens as far as the broad wall and above the gate of Ephraim, above the old gate, above the fish gate, the tower of Hananel, the tower of the hundred as far as the sheep gate, and they stopped by the gate of the prison.

So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God. Likewise, I and half of the rulers with me, and the priest, Eliakim, Measei, Minjaman, Micaiah, Eliohani, Zechariah, and Hananiah, Hananiah with trumpets, also Messiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzi, Uzi, Jehonanan, Melkijah, Elam, and Ezer.

The singer sang loudly with Jezreiah the director. Also that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy.

The women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off. And at the same time, some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities of the portions specified by the law for the priests and Levites.

For Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered. Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son.

[14:47] For in the days of David and Asaph of old, there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah, all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day.

They also consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron. Now, I'm guessing that about one or two paragraphs, some of you kind of tuned out, or were kind of laughing at my trying to pronounce all these names, but let me recap, so in case we missed it.

What happens is, this is the dedication of the wall. All of God's people are there together, around the wall that's been built around Jerusalem. What happens is, Nehemiah takes two choirs, and he has them with their cymbals, with their string instruments, and all of the other instruments, and he says, go out, sing thanksgiving, sing praise to God.

They meet on the other side, and they come down, and they worship together. And so what I believe this text is going to teach us today, that what it means for us when we worship God corporately.

And first of all, what I think what we see here in Nehemiah chapter 12, is that when we worship God, what we're really doing is, we are celebrating the glory of God.

[16:19] We're celebrating God's glory, because that's what we do as God's people, because this is not a country club. We're not just here as a mutual admiration society.

We're here to admire our Heavenly Father. We're not here to see somebody's latest suit, or somebody's latest dress. We're here to worship God, and God alone.

That's why we gather together. That's why we worship. And we enjoy fellowship with one another, as we encourage each other, as we build each other up, so that we can go outside these four walls, and reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's our mission. So in order to get the picture of what's going on here, what we see is, what we have to remember is, in that day, the temple wasn't just one place here, and one place there.

You know, you go to this temple this week, and you go to the other temple the next week. God's presence, God's name, was there in that temple. When you wanted to worship God, you went to a building, and you worshiped God in that temple.

[17:22] And that's why the temple was rebuilt first. And we see that in Ezra. But then the walls were in shambles. All around the city, and all these pagan people, all these godless people, around the city, were making fun of the Jews.

And God's people, the Jews, were saying, we worship the creator God. We worship one powerful, almighty God. And what were the pagans probably thinking themselves around?

They were all polytheists. They worshiped more than one God. They were probably saying, if this God is so powerful, why doesn't he take care of his people? If he's so powerful, why are the walls torn down, and why are they still in shambles?

And so maybe they're thinking, this God is weak. And so Nehemiah comes and says, this is a shame. This is Jerusalem. We worship God in this place, and we need to rebuild these walls.

God is being ridiculed. We can't have that. We need to do this for the glory of God. And so they're coming together. And matter of fact, let's turn back to Nehemiah chapter 4.

[18:35] Nehemiah chapter 4. And this is talking about the opposition that the Jews faced. As they were rebuilding the walls. God goes over three chapters, talking about the banter back and forth about the opposition they're getting.

And it says in Nehemiah chapter 4, verses 1 through 3, 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? Now, Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.

Trash talking in the Old Testament. Go figure. And so what they were doing was, they were talking trash to the Jews, so it was a psychological thing. If they could get their spirits down, if they could get them depressed and saying, Oh, this is terrible.

[19 : 52] We can't do this. And it's okay. It's like sometimes we let things go unrepaired because we've got other things on our mind. And what we see is, when it comes time to celebrate what God has done, what do they do?

They don't just come out inside the city. They march on top of the walls. They send the choirs out first. They send the worshipers out first.

They send the musical instruments, the singers, the players, and those playing the musical instruments, and they are marching around the city.

And Nehemiah chapter 12 says that the pagans far off could hear them worshipping. Way out! Probably couldn't even see the city.

And they were thinking, What in the world is going on? They are worshipping. They're declaring glory to God and praising and thanking God for only what God could have done through them.

[20 : 55] So why do we gather together for corporate worship? To glorify God. Because it's all about Him. And we're here to glorify Him.

It is a celebration. We celebrate the glory of God. And we need to act like we're celebrating God when we worship together.

But you go into an average Bible church on a Sunday morning, and the only thing that's missing is a casket. Because often you can't tell the difference between celebration and a funeral.

Now, in God's Word, God tells His people to clap their hands, move around, and make a lot of noise. Now, I didn't make this up. I'm just a messenger.

But what I'm saying is, we're celebrating God. We celebrate football teams, and we even register on the Richter scale a football game.

[22 : 01] But when it comes to praising God, we don't put our whole heart, we don't put everything into it. So worshipping God is a celebration. And we'll see this in a couple of different ways.

First of all, I think what we see in Nehemiah chapter 12 is corporate worship really is public enjoyment of who God is. When we worship together as the body of Christ, what we see is corporate worship is public enjoyment of who God is.

Go to verse 27 of Nehemiah chapter 12. Matter of fact, every time you see it, if you've got your pen, you want to circle it in your Bible, go ahead and do that. But it starts off in verse 27 to bring them into Jerusalem to what?

Celebrate the dedication with what? Gladness. It was happy worship. It was happy worship.

They were there to enjoy God. They did it with gladness. They did it with thanksgiving. You go down to verse 31. Two large thanksgiving choirs.

[23 : 12] Two large choirs. We get down to verse 43. That day they offered great sacrifices. They rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great what?

Joy. The women and the children also did what? Rejoiced. So that what? The joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off. What was inherent in their worship?

Joy. Excitement. Happiness. Gladness. That's worship. When we worship God, it's our way of saying, God, you make us so happy.

You make us overjoyed because of who you are. I am so thankful for God's mercy. I am so thankful for God's grace. I am so thankful for God's forgiveness. I am so thankful for God's provision.

I am so thankful for God's protection. I am so thankful for God's presence. I am so thankful for God's power. I am so thankful. And the list could go on and on and on and on.

[24 : 18] Corporate worship is public enjoyment of who God is. We ought to be happy people. Now, it doesn't mean that all of our circumstances make us happy.

And it's okay to cry. And sometimes we are sad. But we need to come back. We, I think according to God's word, we do come back to happy when we remember who God is and we worship him together.

The sound of rejoicing could be heard afar off. Now, worship really is not about us. It's about God. We're not here for us.

We're here for him. But worship ought not to be boring. Let's go on to the next thing. So corporate worship is public enjoyment of who God is.

But corporate worship is also public thanksgiving. Public thanksgiving for all God has done. When we get together as the body of Christ, when the church gets together and we worship, I think thanksgiving ought to be involved.

[25 : 20] Because we're thanking God for what he's done. We're thanking God for who he is. We're thanking God for the miracles that he's worked in our life. Because I know he's worked miracles in your life. He's worked miracles in mine.

He provides. I had breakfast this morning. Now, some of you don't eat breakfast. That's okay. But you probably could have if you wanted to. Because we're a very, very blessed people. And we can thank God for all that he's done.

Look in verse 27. Both with what? Thanksgiving and singing. Nehemiah put together two thanksgiving choirs.

Go down to verse 31. He appointed two large, what kind of choirs? Choirs to give thanksgiving. Thanksgiving choirs. Look down at verse 40.

So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God. They gave thanks. Emphasis on thanksgiving. Verse 40.

[26 : 19] Verse 46. What we see there. For in the days of David and Asaph of old, there were chiefs of the singers and the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

So why mention all these gates as they're going along? You know, we're here to the water gate.

We're here at the sheep gate. We're here at the gate of the prison. We're here at this gate.

We're here at that gate. Well, imagine the scene. In the beginning of Nehemiah, under the cover of darkness, with nobody else knowing what's going on, Nehemiah walks around and just does some reconnaissance.

He's walking by gate, after gate, after gate, after gate. No security whatsoever for the city. They are open to attack. They are open to ridicule.

And so, Nehemiah is praying to God as he's walking around the city, seeing gate after gate, torn down, in shambles, the doors of the gates burnt. And now we come to Nehemiah 12.

[27 : 18] They're back up. And the city is secure again. God's glory is evident to all the nations around them. And so they were thanking God for what he has done.

That is part of worship. And then the next thing that we see, we thank God for what he's done. But the next part of worship is, the second main thing that we see is, we participate in worship as the people of God.

We participate as God's people. Now you see all over this text in Nehemiah chapter 12, all kinds of people involved in this thing.

A huge gathering of people. Everybody gathered together. And before we dive in and look at the specifics, what I want us to see here, very quickly, is compare this worship that we see in Nehemiah 12, and compare it to what we might see today.

You know, some forms of contemporary worship. And really see, not anything wrong necessarily, but things that we have to be careful for. We have to be careful about. The first thing is, an individualistic attitude.

[28 : 36] We have to be careful not to be caught up in an individualistic attitude. Now are there individuals mentioned in Nehemiah 12? Yeah, sure there is.

I mean, all the names I couldn't pronounce. So there are a bunch of individuals, but what were they doing? They were worshiping as one. They were worshiping together as one.

And we miss this sometimes, especially in our individualistic culture in America. But sometimes we miss this in our individualistic worship culture.

You know, sometimes we're told, this is true, but we have to be careful. You know, we're told, you know what, when you're worshiping together, it's only you and God. That's true. It's only you and God when you're worshiping by yourself.

But get this, when you're worshiping with the body of Christ, it's you and the body of Christ worshiping God. So be careful. It's not just about us.

[29 : 36] Now, yes, we should not allow what somebody's doing next to us influence what we're doing in the sense that, well, they're doing it wrong and I'm not going to do that, or I'm doing it this way and they should be doing it my way. We have to be careful not to do that, but at the same time, we have to understand that when we worship, we worship together.

When we're together, we are worshipping corporately together our Heavenly Father. And that is what we see here. And we're worshipping together for a reason.

There's a why. We don't ignore each other. Because when we're together as the body of Christ, we value each other. Because we're all related. Because we're all God's people. And so we do it together as a body.

Just like when you walk, do you realize that your feet aren't the only ones walking? Your legs are involved. Guess what? When you walk, are your hands involved?

Yeah. You see, we're all involved in everything we do. And so when we worship, we worship together. It's not just me and God. It's me and you and you and you and you and you and God when we're worshipping together.

[30 : 38] So we have to be careful about not being too individualistic when we come together. Because this is about the church worshipping God. This is about the body of Christ worshipping God together.

That's the first thing. Be careful about not being engaged in an individualistic approach to God solely when we worship together as a body of Christ. The second thing is the spectator approach. What do we see here in Nehemiah chapter 12? They participated. But guess what we've done in our modern worship.

When I say modern, I mean in the last 500 years. What we've done in our modern worship is we've put chairs all in a row. You're looking at the backs of people's heads and there's a stage and there are, air quote, performers on the stage and there's a possibility of being a spectator watching people worship.

See where I'm getting? Worship is not a spectator event. Worship is we do it together. Now, we have people leading worship.

[31 : 53] But catch what I'm saying. Leading worship. And we're all to be worshipping together. Even verse 43, it says, well, the men were rejoicing.

It says in verse 43, the women and the children were also enjoying worship. Were engaged in worship together. You know what? There's no child too small that they can't be engaged in worship. Now, they may do it together as a group there, but they can also do it together with their family here. I'm not saying there's any one right or wrong way to do it. But children can worship. Men, women, boys and girls can worship together.

So we've got to avoid these two things. To have such an individualistic mindset that it's just me and God here. No, it's me and everyone else here and God.

And we're to encourage each other as we worship. And that's the next thing that we see. If you're taking notes, the point of corporate worship is to encourage each other.

[32 : 54] The whole point of why we do this together, aside from glorifying God, is to encourage one another.

That's where I want to see the parallels between the Old Testament and the New Testament. And obviously Nehemiah 12 is a picture of God's people glorifying God, but everyone was part of the equation.

Now I'll show you an example. Hold your finger here. Let's go to Ephesians chapter 5. This is the Apostle Paul. And he is talking about what happens when people are filled with the Holy Spirit. And I want us to look down at verse 19. I think one of the clearest mandates for some form of corporate worship. He says in verse 19, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Guess what? You can't do that in solitude. Now, some of us may want you to be in solitude when you sing, right? You may want me to be in solitude when I try to sing.

[34 : 04] But the point is, God says we encourage each other. We sing to one another. We encourage each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And if you take a hymn book and you look through a hymn book, probably 80% or more of the hymns in the hymn book are meant to be sung to each other.

If you look at probably 80, 85% of the hymns, they're not sung to God. They're sung to each other. Matter of fact, you take all hail the power of Jesus' name. What are you doing when you sing that? You're singing to one another, encouraging each other to hail the power of Jesus' name. Crown him with many crowns. The same thing. So many other songs.

I think that's not too bad. Why? Because I might be feeling down one day when we're worshiping together. I might have had a bad week. I might have had a bad morning. I might have spilled coffee on the floor and on my jacket.

By the way, which is the reason why I'm not wearing my jacket this morning because I spilled coffee on it. Right? And the coffee are jammed. And we just had a bad morning all together. But you know what?

[35 : 13] You can encourage me when we sing together and say, Pastor, let's sing glory to God. Let's praise God together. That's worship.

That's corporate worship. We encourage one another. Secondly, we express our unity when we worship. When we're worshiping together, we're expressing our unity together.

When you come back to Nehemiah chapter 12 and you read those verses, actually all the way from chapter 1 all the way through the end, but in chapter 12 you see different people, different choirs, you see different musicians.

Not everyone was playing the same instrument. Not everyone was doing it together because they had two different choirs, two different Thanksgiving choirs coming around and there was unity in their worship.

And I think that's something that we've missed. We've missed the point, especially within the last 20 or so years of the church together because instead of looking to worship to unify us, we've gotten the idea that the design of worship is what unifies us or the style or the preference.

[36 : 24] That if you don't like my style of worship, then we're not unified. But I think we need to understand that it's not the style of worship that unifies us. It's the reason for our worship that unifies us.

And what's happened is so many churches have said, you know what, we're going to be this style or that style and if you don't like it, get out. And what we're thinking that we're unified because we all agree.

Do you realize agreement is not unification? If we realize that the only reason why we're here is Jesus died on the cross in our place. He loved us so much that he paid our penalty and we're here together.

It's the gospel that unifies. It's the gospel of Jesus that unifies. It's the glory of God that unifies. So when we come together and if we can realize that unity comes from agreeing and believing that God is good, God is glorified, he needs our glory, he wants us to glorify him and we're all here because of the gospel and I think we will be unified together because of that.

I think if you go back to Nehemiah chapter 8, go to Nehemiah chapter 8 verse 1, he talks about they were unified together. Why were they unified? They were unified because of what God had done in their midst and so they were unified together for that.

[37 : 46] Now I'm not saying there's not differences, I'm not saying there's not preferences, you know, that's okay. But if we can come together and say, you know what, we're worshiping God and God alone and we're worshiping God and we're unified together because of the gospel unifies us together, then I think we will be much further along.

And then the next thing that we see is I believe we establish continuity with the church when we worship God corporately. we see that really throughout Nehemiah chapter 12.

We see the continuity from 500 years before unifying them and continuing what we see there.

We see it three different times in this passage, Nehemiah chapter 12 verse 27 through the end of the chapter verse 47 is David is mentioned. Asaph is mentioned.

Well, that's been 500 years. 500 years have passed and they're still mentioning David. They're still mentioning David's worship and they're still mentioning Asaph's worship. Well, you know what?

[38 : 51] I'm sure worship kind of changed in 500 years. But the continuity is David worshiped God. We're worshiping God. Asaph worshiped God. We're worshiping God. They had set singers.

They had set worship teams. And this is what we're doing. So it doesn't mean we worship the same way 500 years from now, but it means is what we're doing today will inform worship if the Lord carries many years hence.

Because mama worshiped God. Daddy worshiped God. Grandpa worshiped God. Grandma worshiped God. Relatives I don't even know existed maybe worshiped God. And that's what's important. We worship God together corporately. Three different times we see that. We see it in 1 Chronicles 15. We see it in 1 Chronicles 25. 500 years before that what's happening. And we see these names mentioned. And then thirdly, as we come down to a close, what we see is we dedicate ourselves to the service of God. [39 : 57] We dedicate ourselves to the service of God. From the very beginning we see dedication. I want us to draw a line from here in the New Testament and think in two different ways how we do this.

The first is we sacrifice our resources for ministry. We sacrifice our resources for ministry. Look at verse 47.

In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers a portion for each day. They also consecrated holy things for the Levites and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron.

Now at this point we're not going to really dive into tithing but what we see in the Old Testament God expected his people to give 10% of their gross income to him for the work of the ministry. Then we get to the New Testament. What we see in 1 Corinthians and other writings of the Apostle Paul we see even the poorest people in the poorest churches they're told not only to give their tithe but they're told to give sacrificially.

[41 : 03] They're told to give gladly with abundance and that's the picture that we see here 2 Corinthians chapter 8 chapter 9 give us that picture and this is the picture of worship people sacrificing for worship.

They took care of the singers they took care of the Levites and they took care of to make sure that things were accomplished and then we surrender our lives for mission.

We surrender our lives for mission. Here's what we need to look at what we must look at when we see Nehemiah chapter 12 through the lens of the New Testament.

We come to the dedication of these walls and if that's all we see and if we see Nehemiah chapter 12 saying well we ought to get we ought to dedicate buildings then I think we've missed it because Old Testament the glory of God dwelt in a building.

Jesus Christ comes on the scene he dies gives his life Jesus said he was the temple remember that? He said I'll rebuild it in three days. He wasn't talking about the physical brick and mortar temple he was talking about his body.

[42 : 16] Then he rises again Acts chapter 1 he sends the Holy Spirit and then to indwell us and then what does he say? We are the building we individually are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Do you realize that we're not at church today? We're not at church. We're in a building where the church meets but we're not at church.

You know we say that and I even use that term myself well let's go to the church so we can take care of this but that's a misnomer because this building is not the church. this building is just a building and the church meets here.

The church could meet across the street the church could meet in your house the church meets together wherever the church is and so I think what we realize is it's our lives that we are surrendering for mission and anytime we go out in public and we glorify God and we name the name of Jesus do you realize what we're doing?

we're taking the church to the world. We are the church in the world and we are sharing the gospel we are making disciples out there so we not only sacrifice our resources for ministry we surrender our lives to do this and so this is where and we might say well what's the whole point?

[43 : 36] What's the bottom line? I'm glad you asked as you look in your notes I believe what we see is that God desires to awaken the body of Christ in worship so that together we might proclaim the glory of Christ to the world because what did we see in Nehemiah 12?

We saw at the beginning of the book or we see at the beginning of the book the walls and shambles them being ridiculed by the pagans but then what we see in Nehemiah 12 the walls built up they are excited and their joy filled thanksgiving singing could be heard miles around the world they were proclaiming the glory of Christ to the world in their worship and that's what we do because we don't know that from Sunday to Sunday someone who might be searching for Jesus searching for God searching for something different in their life might walk in and I think they want to see in our

worship that we glorify God we love God we live for God that our lives during the week look like we live for God not like we're living for the world but that we are living for the world to know Jesus Christ as their Savior so we worship corporately together as a community as a community we do things together because we're the body of Christ let's pray

Father this morning we thank you so much Lord God I thank you that that you love us so much that you have called us by your name you have given to us your Holy Spirit you have put within us a power that surpasses our own understanding and Lord you you are able to erase you are able to cover you are able to remove everything in our lives that is not glorifying to you and you do it all through the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I thank you Father that you're able to give us a clean slate that you're able to give us the power to please you in everything we do and I thank you Father for each one here this morning may we glorify you together may we glorify you individually but Lord God may we glorify you in all that we do thank you for each one here today

I thank you for each family that's represented Lord God may we teach this to our children to our grandchildren and encourage them to worship you to worship you together because you deserve all the honor all the glory and all the praise that we could ever muster Father we thank you for it's in Jesus name that we pray Amen