

# Give Us A Vision

*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: 03 September 2023

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 121, in the Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 121, page 416 of the Psalm books.

I'm going to sing the whole of this Psalm. The tune is The Bees of Harris. We'll sing from verse 1, I to the hills will lift mine eyes. From whence doth come my need?

My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm. To God's praise we stand to sing. I to the hills will lift mine eyes.

From whence doth come my need? My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot he'll not bless, lie nor will, his number that he keeps.

[ 1 : 33 ] Behold, he that keeps Israel, he slumbers no more sleep.

The Lord, the gate, the Lord, thy chief.

On thy bright hand doth stay. The moon, thy night, he shall not smile, nor yet the sun hide him.

The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill.

Hent for thy going out and in.

[ 2 : 58 ] God keep forever will. Let's join our hearts together in prayer.

Let us pray. Amen. Lord, our gracious God, we come singing praise to you. Thankful for these words that we have sung, words that we may be very familiar with, and yet words that remind us of just how great and an awesome God you are.

We thank you that we come to you in the midst of all our different needs. We can come wondering where we can turn to, where we can look for help in all our different circumstances.

But we come reminded in this psalm that we can lift up our eyes to you. That we can look to you as the one who is able to give us that safety, that security in all our different needs.

The one who has made the heaven and the earth and all that is contained in them. We thank you for the wonder of these words. That you have power over all things.

[ 4 : 13 ] In all the questions that this world so often asks. In all the information that is put out in so many different ways. With people telling us how we came to be.

How we are formed in this world. People telling us the different purposes we have. But all of them focused on self.

We thank you that your word reminds us of where we are from. Who has made us and who has made all things. And the more we see you, the more we recognize how frail we are.

The more we see that your ways are above our ways. Your thoughts so far above ours. That there is none who compares to you. The greatest wisdom and intelligence among men in this world.

Is so minute in comparison to you. But we recognize too Lord. That in the smallness that we see ourselves in.

[ 5 : 12 ] That that is not how you see us. You see each of us formed by you. Made in your image. And made with that purpose. Made with that shape in our heart.

That so often we lack. So often we do not see. That God shaped void as is so often spoken about. Nothing else in this world can fill and satisfy our hearts.

And until we come and see you. As Lord and God of all. And Lord and God for us. Then there is always that void. There is always that one thing missing.

In our life. And so we pray and thank you for the way. That you have made yourself known to all people. We thank you that down through all the generations.

Of mankind. That you have revealed yourself to us. That you have spoken to us. And through your word. That you have spoken. In times past.

[ 6 : 11 ] As the word says. Through prophets. Throughout the Old Testament. We see. How that was. The way that you spoke. To so many different people. But we see too Lord.

That your word reminds us. That in these days. You have spoken to us. Through your son. Christ Jesus. And we thank you. That we continue to hear. What he is saying to us. Through your word. And by your spirit. And yet our ears are so often deaf. To what you are saying. So often we just listen to our own hearts. We listen to our own thoughts. But may you give us. Ears to hear. And hearts to understand. All that you are saying to us. Even in the days in which we live. Days which we despair of so often. But yet days that we can rejoice. In your goodness. That you are still the same. That you are the same yesterday. Today and forever. And that even as in the days of old. [ 7 : 10 ] And we see it so often in your scriptures. When people had wandered away from you. That there is a promise. That if we return. That you are able to bless. And so we pray that you will help us.

Individually and collectively. As a nation. And as nations of this world. To recognize who you are. To turn to you. To seek you with all our hearts.

To look to you. And to recognize. That you are the one. Who is able to keep us. That you are the one. With whom. We find all that we need. And so we pray.

Even in our midst this evening. That if there are any. Who do not know you in that way. If there are any. Who do not know you. As a very personal savior.

That Lord you would speak to us. That you will help us to see. That Jesus calling. We pray too Lord. That as a church. You would give us a burden.

[ 8 : 09 ] That you would give us a burden. For all around us. That you would give us. In the midst of a burden. A vision. To be a church. That serves you. To all ends. Of the earth.

That we would look beyond. Our walls here. That we would look beyond. The walls of our own homes. But that we would look. With eyes of faith. To all we see around us.

That you would help us. Oh Lord. To see. Through eyes of faith. A people perishing. A world that is lost. And in turmoil. A world that does not know.

Where to turn. Or where to look. And we pray. Oh Lord. That you will help us. As a people here.

That you will help us. To serve you. To honor your word.

To fulfill your call. Upon your church. For these days. To be a people. Who show forth. The wonders. Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 9 : 05 ] To be a people. Who. From our own doorstep. To wherever you will take us. That we would take the wonder. Of your gospel. The truth contained therein.

And that you would make us. Lord your disciples. That you will make us. Your servants. For all the different tasks. That are involved. In your church. We pray oh Lord.

That you will burden us. With a vision. A vision for people. A vision for God. And a vision to trust you. And so we pray Lord. For your church today.

Here in our town. We pray for all your people. That you will encourage us. And build us up in our faith. That you will enable us. To know. The wonder of your gospel.

That you will enable us. To know the wonder of your truth. More and more. We thank you for every opportunity. That we have. To learn from you. We thank you for the.

[ 10 : 02 ] Conference that took place. Yesterday in Inverness. And for the many women. Who were there. Sharing in fellowship. And around your word. We pray that they would have been. Inspired and blessed by you.

That in the midst of praise. And worship. That they would feel. In their own hearts. Your nearness. And your presence with them. We thank you for these occasions. That so often. Stir us up in our hearts.

To serve you more and more. And we pray Lord. That each and every one of us. Even today. As we have worshipped you. And this evening anew. That your word. Will stir us up in our hearts.

All the more. To go into the week ahead. Delighting and rejoicing in you. And seeking to serve you. With all our hearts. We pray for all that the week.

May entail for us. We thank you for. Opportunities of worship. And bible study. We pray for the. The Wednesday evening. As a more informal.

[ 10 : 56 ] Bible study resumes. We ask for. Encouragement around your word. There. And blessing to flow from it. We thank you too Lord. For a communion season. In our midst.

We thank you for our own. Communion services last week. And for new members. In our midst. We pray blessing to follow. All that was done in your name. And to continue to. Bless the communion

season.

Throughout. Our town and villages. At this time. That there will be days. Of great encouragement. Great days of refreshing. And blessing from you. We pray for those.

With different needs. Today as well. We are reminded. Day after day. Lord. How quickly. Our life circumstances. Can change. We are reminded today.

That there are always. Those who mourn. Around the world. And in our own communities. And sometimes. It comes closer to home. Than at other times. But we thank you.

[ 11 : 51 ] That in the midst. Of sorrow and sadness. That you are the one. Who is able to comfort. To comfort. Beyond all the comfort. That we can offer. And we pray Lord.

For those who are broken hearted. Those who are grieving. The loss of loved ones. At this time. We pray oh Lord. For you to surround them. To uphold them. To be near to them.

In a special way. We pray too. For those who are unwell. Those who are laid aside. At this time Lord. Those who have concerns. And anxieties. Over health. Or over loved ones.

Or different addictions. And different problems. We face in life. We pray oh Lord. Your encouragement. Your help to us. We remember our world as well.

We have seen so much. In these. Even these last few weeks. Of natural disasters. And ongoing conflicts. And all that. Seems to be coming. More and more regular.

[ 12 : 46 ] In our world. We pray oh Lord. That you will awaken us. That you will stir us up. That in the midst of all that goes on. That your voice is speaking to us. And yet. So often we seem deaf to it.

We pray oh Lord. That from our leaders. Down through governments. And parliaments. And all who rule over us. Lord. That you will come in your power. That you will open their hearts.

To receive your word. And receive it gladly. We know that you can change. Even the hardest. The cruelest of hearts. And so we look to you Lord.

To have mercy upon us. We ask oh Lord. Lacking faith. So often even in our own hearts. In our own prayers. We often ask oh Lord.

Do we believe. In all that we're asking. And Lord you see. Even if you have faith. The size of a mustard seed. That we can overcome. And so we pray Lord.

[ 13 : 42 ] That you will give us faith. That you will help us. To pray earnestly. And to pray believing. That all that we ask. Or imagine. You can do so much more.

Lord hear our prayers. Pardon all our sin. And continue with us now. As we keep worshipping you. In praise. In your word being read. And sharing together around it.

Bless us. Help us to lift our hearts to you. In all that we do. As we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. We'll again sing to God's praise.

This time in Psalm 37. In the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 37. Page 252. We'll sing from verse 1. Down to verse 7. And the tune is Denfield. Psalm 37 at verse 1. For evildoers. Fret thou not.

[ 14 : 42 ] Thyself unquietly. Nor do thou envy. Bear to those. That work. Iniquity. Verse 4 says. Delight thyself in God. He'll give thine heart's desire to thee.

Thy way to God commit. Him trust. It bring to pass. Shall he. We'll sing from verse 1 to 7. To God's praise. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 15 : 37 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Even the obedSniff Theatrelyn. amanhe salads interval.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. washed. Amen. Unlike the green and tender hair, they withers shall await.

Set thou thy trust upon the Lord, and be thou doing good.

And so the wind, the land shall dwell, and verily have been.

Delight thyself in God he'll give, thine heart's desire to thee.

[ 16 : 51 ] Thy way to God, commit in trust, faith bring to pass shall be.

And like unto the plight he shall thy righteousness display.

And he thy judgments shall bring forth, like noontide of the day.

Raised in the Lord, and patiently, we hold him, do not pray.

For him who bows clean in his way, sucks their sins in the gates.

[18:05] Amen. We turn to read God's word in the Old Testament and in the book of Nehemiah. Reading in chapter 1.

Nehemiah chapter 1. And we're going to read the whole of this chapter together. And indeed our focus this evening is going to be on what we see here in this first chapter of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah chapter 1. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah. Now it happened in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa, the capital, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah.

And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned for days.

[19:26] And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night.

For the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

We have acted very corruptly against you, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples.

But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though you are dispersed and under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.

They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

[21:09] Now I was a cupbearer to the king. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to look at this passage, we'll sing in Psalm 40.

Again, Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 40. We'll sing down from verse 1 to the end of the double, verse 5. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length.

To me he did incline my voice and cry to hear. The tune is Balerma and we'll sing from 1 to double, verse 5. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length to me.

He did incline my voice and cry to hear.

He put anew of the fearful pain and from the mighty clay.

[22:45] And on a rock he set my feet.

He established in my way. He put a new song in my mouth.

Our God to magnify. Many shall see it and shall fear.

And on the Lord rely. O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord rely.

He put a new song in my mouth.

[24:28] The wonders love has done Thy gracious thoughts to us were far Above all thoughts are gone In order none can record them To Thee if them declare And speak of them I would be more than can be And can be number one

We can turn back to our reading in Nehemiah chapter 1. As we look at this chapter together this evening, Nehemiah chapter 1.

We look at this chapter 2.

We look at the world together and how they come to a point where at the end they are worshipping and praising God. They are disastrous in their midst to something wonderful taking place.

There is devastation in Jerusalem as you read here and the walls are broken down. You think of our own last few weeks and how we have seen so much devastation around the world in different places.

[26:49] So much devastation caused by fire in different places. So much devastation caused by flooding in other places. In other places there have been hurricanes leaving places devastated.

Almost destroyed by the power of destruction involved in these things. And often the question when you see these kinds of situations is how can things possibly get back to where they once were. How they once were. But what it takes is a people to see the need for restoration. The need for rebuilding. The need for getting back on their feet again. And not just wallowing in the circumstances that they are in. Well as you look at Nehemiah here. What we see is a situation of devastation in Jerusalem. Walls broken down by fire. Much that would leave a people feeling despondent. But then as we said at the end of the book there is a situation of praise. [ 27 : 55 ] Worshipping God. And so the question we ask is how do they go from one situation to another? Well they themselves needed a vision restored.

They needed their hearts encouraged for the work that lay ahead of them. They needed someone to come in with a vision to help them go forward. And the restoration work to begin. We have a lot of buzz words in our society. Sometimes they are words that we have been familiar with for maybe a long time. But they are maybe used in a new way. And they mean something new. Buzz words that people like to use. For example. You think of people speaking about climate change and all these things just now.

A buzz word is net zero. When people are talking about net zero they are meaning we need to get the balance right. If we are using fossil fuel in so much quantity.

[ 28 : 57 ] We need to offset it by using renewables. So you have this net zero. In the world of technology just now the buzz word is artificial intelligence.

So much is being said about this artificial intelligence that is going to be able to do so much for us. And yet there is so much fear around it as well that it could potentially take over.

In the world of sport as well you get buzz words from time to time. One just now is on a journey. How different teams or different groups are on a journey.

And all of these buzz words they call something to mind. Many of them speak into a situation that needs to change.

And they also speak about how that change is going to come about. And they are connected so often to another buzz word.

[ 29 : 59 ] And that buzz word is vision. A people of vision. It is spoken so much of in the world around us.

But how much does it impact us here in the church? Maybe we don't like buzz words in the church. Buzz words like change so often fill us with fear.

And yet when we think of the word vision. It is a word that we all need to have when it comes to church. When it comes to looking at what is going on around us.

When it identifies and sees a need for something to happen. When it looks at how we are going to go about doing that.

When it looks ahead. When it looks forward to what we would hope would come from it. Vision is something that we always have to have. And what we see in Nehemiah is a man of vision.

[ 31 : 05 ] A man who was burdened and who had a vision. A man whose whole life changed with a simple question.

When you read here in the middle of verse 2. Hanani, one of his brothers, had come to him. And it says there, And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped.

Who had survived the exile. And concerning Jerusalem. Asking, how are they? And they said to me, The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. And its gates are destroyed by fire. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

A simple question. How are they? Leads to this huge change in Nehemiah's life.

[ 32 : 16 ] But also this vision. And this visionary that you see throughout the rest of the book of Nehemiah. It sounds as if he's despondent.

He's dismayed. And there is a time for that. A time to weep and to mourn. But what you see as you go on is that he was encouraged. And that then he was an encourager.

He was given a vision. And he shared this vision with others. George Barna is an American writer. You may read some of his material.

You might agree with some of it or disagree with some of it. But he has this idea of seeking to encourage, especially churches, how to look at themselves and their situations and think, how can we improve?

How can we be better? And so much of what he says is about having a vision. Having a burden. And in one place he says this.

[ 33 : 22 ] Vision is the ability to understand the history, the present condition, and the potential of the church. And to conceive a plan for action that will maximize the ministry potential.

More often than not, vision is a result of having spent much time absorbing the facts about the community. Knowing the resources upon which the church can call.

People, funding, facilities, equipment, etc. And devising sound but creative strategies for moving forward. Vision always entails progress.

It is never satisfied with the status quo. He is speaking there of the church and the journey it should be on.

Not happy, not satisfied with the status quo. But vision always entails progress. Nehemiah was a visionary.

[ 34 : 27 ] He wasn't happy with how things were in Jerusalem. But instead of just talking about it or moaning about it, he took action.

And through his vision, he led the people of God and inspired them in the work, in the Lord's work. And if we were to capture this vision too, this burden too, it would help keep driving us forward in the Lord's work as well.

And in chapter 1, I want us to see three aspects of the vision that Nehemiah has. They appear in this chapter. We're not looking at them in the order of importance, but just the order that they come in the chapter itself.

And the three aspects of the vision that Nehemiah has is this. First of all, his vision for the people. The second thing you see is his vision of God.

And the third thing you have is his vision of trust. So first of all, you have his vision for a people. At the very end of this chapter, you have almost like a throwaway remark.

[ 35 : 41 ] The last words of chapter 1. Now I was cupbearer to the king. This is Nehemiah. I was cupbearer to the king.

It just seems to be thrown in there. But why is it there? What's important about this? Well, it helps us to tie things together.

Now I was a cupbearer for the king. A cupbearer was one who spent his life working beside the king at that time.

A cupbearer would test everything that the king was going to eat or to drink to make sure that it was safe for the king to consume. He lived in the palace.

He lived alongside the king. In many ways, he lived a good life. He had everything that he needed here. Maybe the last thing he thought he needed was change or something more challenging or something more difficult.

[ 36 : 43 ] So him being a cupbearer to the king shows that he was well off. That he was in a very comfortable position. But the danger with being in that kind of situation in life, the danger of having the good life is that it's so easy to become complacent.

It's so easy to take things for granted. And Nehemiah here in the midst of his good life. His world is shaken.

And he's about to become unsettled in so many ways. And this comes through Hanani, a news that he brings of Jerusalem.

This simple question that Nehemiah asks about those who had returned from exile, those who had gone back to Jerusalem, those who were very far away from where he was.

This question is about to turn his world upside down. When you meet up with friends and family, it's one of the most natural questions to ask, especially if you haven't seen them for a while or if there's others you're concerned about.

[ 38 : 01 ] It's a most natural question in the world to ask, how are they? To ask after people. It's something we do on a very regular basis.

And this can lead to sometimes hearing good news. Perhaps you've not heard that so-and-so got married or so-and-so's had a child. Sometimes we hear things we hadn't heard and we're delighted to hear good news.

But other times we hear sad news. People who are unwell. People who have passed away. People who are struggling in different ways. Maybe we've not heard it.

We've asked, how are they? And it leaves us then feeling down. Feeling a sense of maybe burden for them. But it's in asking that question, how are they?

And hearing perhaps someone struggling, someone's lost a loved one, someone is unwell, all of these things. The question is, does it leave a lasting impression?

[ 39 : 06 ] Does it stay with us as a lasting concern? When you look at verse 2 here as he asks about them.

I ask them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile and concerning Jerusalem. As he's asking this question, he is concerned for the people.

And as he's asking this question, he's asking about those who have escaped, those who have survived the exile.

The remnant it uses in verse 3. These kinds of words that are thrown in here. But behind this question is so much meaning. When you see that word, escaped or remnant, there's so much meaning behind it.

In Isaiah chapter 10, it speaks there in verse 20 about a remnant. The remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob.

[ 40 : 09 ] And it speaks there that they will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. There is this question behind Nehemiah's, what he's saying here as well.

It's not just how are they in a general sense, but how are they in a spiritual sense? And who are they leaning on?

Who are they finding help with? Are they finding their help in the Lord? And what he hears is this, in verse 3.

They said to me, the remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. And this is what unsettles Nehemiah.

This is what deeply concerns Nehemiah. He has been complacent. He has been getting on well.

[ 41 : 19 ] But unbeknown to him, there are many who are struggling. Many who are in despair. And the hearing of this, it says, as soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept.

He has this vision for a people. He has this burden for a people. And when we think for ourselves today, even of the town in which we're living in, do we have a vision and a burden for those who are around us?

Do we just ask in a general way, how is so-and-so doing? And we hear they're struggling and do nothing about it.

Are we asking these questions? Are we praying these prayers? You think of how often we pray to see these pews filled. Is it a real burden for us?

Or is it a throwaway prayer? Who do we want to see in these pews? Are we praying for a certain kind of person to come in?

[ 42 : 40 ] Those just like ourselves? Would we mind who came in through our doors? Do we have a vision for the people around us?

All the people. We hear so many problems in our town, in our island. And those who have these problems, would we welcome them through the door?

Would we welcome them and say, come, take a seat and hear of the gospel? Come, take a seat. What can I do to help you?

When was the last time we wept and mourned over the people of this town? Nehemiah here, his vision begins with the people.

A simple question. How are they? They are in trouble and in great shame. And he weeps and mourns.

[ 43 : 41 ] For ourselves as a church, when we think of the troubles around us, are we concerned? Do we have a vision?

Do we have a burden? And where does that lead us? Well, for Nehemiah, there is this powerful vision, this powerful burden for the people.

And where you see it leads him is to our second point, his vision of God. His vision of God. The people are in trouble, he hears.

And where does it take him? It takes him to God. You see that as he sat and wept in verse 4. He mourned for days and continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Before the God of heaven. I'm not just going to move on quickly, he's saying. I haven't just asked that question.

[ 44 : 44 ] And I'm going to forget I asked. I forget the response I heard. I am taking this to the Lord. And I am not going to just take it to the Lord for a time.

I'm going to keep praying. Day and night. Crying out to the Lord until something happens. Our greatest help in our greatest need is always our great God.

And that's what Nehemiah reminds us of here. Again and again throughout scripture we're reminded that there is no one who can help us like God.

You think of the disciples in John chapter 6. There were many who were finding Jesus' teaching too difficult. They turned away. And Jesus turned to the disciples and said to them, Do you want to go away as well?

Well Peter responded for them and said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And so where can we go?

[ 45 : 50 ] With a burden for a people who are perishing, where can we go? We go to the Lord who has the words of eternal life. He turns to God in prayer.

And as you read through his prayer here, it reminds us of the power that there is in prayer. He is the God of heaven.

The great and awesome God it says in verse 5. There is none like him. There is none like him. He praises God for who he is.

And when we think ourselves of our prayers, do we recognize who it is we are praying to? Every week we repeat the Lord's prayer here.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. We can so easily repeat these words, but do we realize what the words mean? Who it is we are speaking about?

[ 46 : 55 ] Our Father who art in heaven. The God of heaven, as Nehemiah says here. The great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him.

The one who remembers his people. Nehemiah prays to the God of heaven. And that's the God we look to too.

His vision is towards God. His perseverance, his prayer is there for us to see as well. Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel.

You see his burden for the people still there as he looks to God day and night. He speaks about repentance. Again, when we look to God, we have to acknowledge how we can so easily turn away from him.

And our need of repentance. When you read these verses here of the sins of the people. It says there in the middle of verse 6.

[ 48 : 12 ] I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel which they have sinned against you. You know, we look at the state of Jerusalem here.

How they'd lost hope. They were despairing. They turned away from God. We look at our own world, our own situation today. And the church and where we find ourselves in.

What is our repentance like? When you read these verses, do you look away from yourself first? Think the situation in the church is because of what's going on away from myself.

Or do you look within? When you look at Nehemiah here, he's praying in a way, he says, which we have sinned against you.

Even I and my father's house have sinned. Repentance begins with ourselves. Not blaming someone else for the state of the church.

[ 49 : 20 ] But looking at ourselves and our own heart before God. We have to ask ourselves, do we need to repent?

How we become complacent like Nehemiah? Comfortable in our circumstances, in our situation. Like he was as a cup bader to the king.

He was away from his home. Away from his people. Was he serving God as he should? No. But he's looking to God.

And his vision is towards God. And what you see too is, he is looking at God in this way, where he is grasping the promises of God.

In verse 8, remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though you are dispersed and under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there.

[ 50 : 31 ] He is grasping the promises of God. His vision for the people who are perishing leads him to the vision of God and grasping all of his promises.

Are we grasping the promises of God ourselves? Are we pleading the promises of God before him? Maybe our desires are not fulfilled because we fail to see the greatness of God in what we ask.

What we need, as well as a vision for the people, is a vision for God who has promised to abundantly bless when we come in faith.

That leads us to our third and final point. His vision of trust. Trusting in God who was able to make things happen.

[ 51 : 38 ] The closing verses, they show us a vision of God. Because he knows no matter how much he has a burning desire in his heart to help the people, that apart from God, he can do nothing.

But God has a purpose for him. And what he does is he puts himself into God's hands. He pleads to God to let his servant prosper.

In verse 11. Oh Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name.

And give success to your servant today. Grant him mercy in the sight of this man. He was open to change in his life.

His journey was about to take a very different direction. From the comfort of being alongside a king who could provide everything for him.

[ 52 : 47 ] He was about to return to Jerusalem. A place where there was much despair and despondency. Where the wall was broken down. Where there was much work to be done.

And yet his vision, his burden, could allow him to do nothing else. When you're driving, or when you're learning to drive, one of the things we're often told is to anticipate the road ahead.

Not just to look directly in front of us. In the here and now. But to look further on. And to see what dangers there may be in the road ahead.

Well, Nehemiah's vision of trust is anticipating the road ahead. Knowing that there's going to be many different challenges along the way.

But seeing God who is able to help. When we look at ourselves as a congregation. When we look at our town. When we look at the church throughout our land today.

[ 53 : 50 ] What are we anticipating on the road ahead? What do we see that lies ahead for us? Are our eyes open?

Or are we just looking at the here and now? Is our faith for today? Or are we looking further ahead? Are we ready for the journey that we're on?

Are we ready in the midst of all the challenges that are around us? Are people who are perishing?

Do we have a vision for them? Do we have a vision of God?

Do we have a vision to trust him for the way ahead? Do we have a vision for the way ahead? Do we have a vision for the way ahead? Nehemiah was given a position. He was given resources.

He was given opportunity. But for anything to happen, he needed a vision of trust for God. Do we want to be like that ourselves?

[ 54 : 52 ] that ourselves. I was once on a train journey to Glasgow and as we were making our way along, we were stopping in different stations and at one station this woman came on in the same carriage as I was sitting in. I was sitting at a table on one side of the carriage and she sat on the other side of the carriage of the table. The train hadn't long moved off when she got up from the seat that she'd sat in and swapped sides. She went to sit on the other side of the table and as she sat down, she noticed that I was looking at her, possibly wondering why she'd moved and she said to me, I'd rather see where I'm going than where I've been. And that always stuck with me.

I thought there's a lesson in that for us all. Are we a people who rather looking back to the past or are we a people who enjoy or want to look forward to where we're going?

Do any of us need to change seat tonight? In our vision for our church, for our people, for our community, are we a people who only look back? And look back in the sense of the days of old when things were better. Or do we look forward with our burden? What do we want in the future? What do we want for our church in the years ahead? What do we want for this town in 10, 20, 30 years' time?

What do we see? What's our vision for this place? The church in Jerusalem was in trouble. And there was great shame. Our town is in trouble and great shame. There is perishing all around us. [ 57 : 05 ] But are we just looking back? Or are we looking forward? The church is in trouble. Do we want to see it restored? Do we have vision? And what is our vision? Is it for self or is it for others?

Is it towards God? And are we trusting in him? About 350 years ago, a shipload of travelers left the United Kingdom. And they made their way to the northeast coast of America.

And there they came ashore and established a town on the shores there. In the first year, they elected a town government. In the second year, the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness. In the third year, the people of the town tried to impeach the government, take over the government because they thought these plans were a waste of public money. To build a road five years into the wilderness, five miles into the wilderness. Just seemed such a waste. Who needed to go there anyway? Here were a people who had traveled 3,000 miles across an ocean and all the dangers that that contained. In a few years, they were not able to see five miles past their own town. They had lost their vision. They had lost their pioneering vision.

Where are we with our vision? How we become complacent with where we are? Complacent with what we have. As George Barnas said, vision always entails progress.

Do we want progress? A vision is never satisfied with the status quo. Are we satisfied with the status quo?

vision entails moving forward, seeing a need, and looking to how that need can be met.

[ 59 : 57 ] So instead of status quo, may we always pray for the vision of Nehemiah, a vision for the people, a vision of God, a vision that trusts in him. Let us pray.

Lord our God, our Father in heaven, we thank you for the burdens that you lay upon the hearts of your people. And may we, O Lord, have a burden in our own hearts, have a burden for the place where you have placed us, and for the people we see around us, and have a burden for the gospel, and for the good news of Jesus. We pray, Lord, that you will give us a vision for our people, and a vision even greater of God, and that you will enable us, through eyes of faith, to trust in him, as we seek to do all for your glory. Amen.

We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 37. We're singing from verse 23 down to verse 27.

Psalm 37 at verse 23, the tune is Kilmarnock. A good man's footsteps by the Lord, I order it aright, and in the way wherein he walks, he greatly doth delight.

We'll sing from verse 23 to 27 to God's praise. Amen. A good man's footsteps by the Lord, I order it aright, and in the way wherein he walks, he will be the Lord.

[ 62 : 08 ] He greatly doth delight. Although he fall, yet shall he, Lord, be cast down utterly.

Because the Lord with his own hand, opposed him mightily.

I have been your hand of a mole, yet have I never seen.

The just man left, nor left his seat, or break the man's been.

He's ever merciful and lends his seat, his place, therefore.

[ 63 : 41 ] Depart from evil and do good and well forevermore.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.