



10-1-17 Sermon Discussion Guide "When Resistance Comes"



Context

Our Christian Education theme for year is "Game On!" We are encouraging people to be fully engaged participants in the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. Throughout this year, the second Sunday of each month will be our "Game On Sundays." We'll explore how we play this game as Christians and what we need in order to play it well. This fall, in the remaining weeks, we are going through the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. This book describes events that take place in the Persian Empire and in Jerusalem during the 5th century BC. The nation of Israel was under the rule of the Persians. Nehemiah was an Israelite servant of the king, Artaxerxes. This story is important for us today because it shows the incredible impact one person can have when God gives them a passionate calling. In these coming weeks we'll explore the calling of Nehemiah and how God used him to change history.

Checking In

Since the last time your group has met, how have each of you experienced God at work? What have you celebrated? What have you mourned?

Introduction

When have you encountered resistance to a project you had undertaken? How did the resistance take shape? How did it effect the overall outcome of the project? How did you grow from the resistance?

Discussing the Text – Nehemiah 2:9-20

1. Why do you think Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite were upset to hear that Nehemiah was coming back to rebuild the walls? (verse 10)
2. Why would Nehemiah have army officers and cavalry travel with him in verse 11? What risks could he have been facing?
3. Why would Nehemiah inspect the city gates during the night in verse 12? What might that tell us about the potential risks involved in his mission?
4. Verse 16 says that Nehemiah hadn't told any of the officials about his task yet. Why?
5. When Nehemiah finally asks the Israelites to help him rebuild the wall in verses 17-18, what is their response?
6. Immediately after the Israelites' decision about rebuilding, what is the response of Sanballat, Tobiah, and now also Geshem in verse 19?

So what?

1. Based on this passage, do you believe following God involves accepting a certain level of risk? Why or why not?
2. According to this passage, did opposition to Nehemiah's plan grow or diminish as more people learned about it? What might this imply about the nature of undertaking new projects or challenges in our lives today?
3. If you feel called to make a difference in the world, should you expect opposition? How much opposition would it take for you to reconsider whether God is actually leading you?
4. If your following God does not involve any risks or challenges, what might that imply about your faith?
5. How can you stand firm under pressure when people try to resist what you are called to do?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Have the group ask God in prayer this week for perseverance in the challenges they face.