CIC 11-15-26
Preacher: Pastor Ramey, Executive Pastor

REVIVAL / RESET

INTRO REMARKS:

Put up this image only after I refer to it… .....(not when I come up)



TWO PARTS TO THIS SERMON.

We have been in our Ezra-Nehemiah series the last several weeks and today we're getting to the final pieces of the puzzle. People dwelling together IS community. As Pastor Randal shared last week, community is forming…. But it still isn't complete. It has a ways to go.

Look at a couple of verses from Neh. 7.

Neh. 7:4 (LSB): **4** Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few and the houses were not rebuilt.

Neh. 7:73 (LSB): **73** So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel lived in their cities. Then the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel *were* in their cities.

So then, community is starting to form, something IS happening among the people. But something ELSE still needs to happen. And that something else, is **REVIVAL** - this is what we'll be talking about, today.

But first, let's see if we can draw a parallel to us, living in the New Testament age.

Look at this chart…**PUT THIS CHART UP**

EVENT	EZRA & NEHEMIAH	FOR BELIEVERS TODAY
RETURN TO TRUE WORSHIP	Rebuilding the Temple and the system of worship	Following Jesus and Growing in Faith
RETURN TO TRUE IDENTITY	Rebuilding the City and its authority structures	Fighting the Enemy and Bringing God's Kingdom on earth
RETURN TO TRUE COMMUNITY	Rebuilding the Dwellings	Living in Community (discipleship) and Building Community (evangelism)
WHEN ALL THIS COMES TOGETHER, IT SETS THE STAGE FOR A RESET AND REVIVAL		

So, what happens when all of this comes together?

The great revivalist, Charles Finney vs. another revivalist, Jonathan Edwards. The truth is probably in the middle.

WE set the stage, GOD brings the sacred…. We set the sacrifice, God brings the fire.

Revival takes time - the Lollards mid 1300's to the mid 1700's English reformation.

Another metaphor: There are TWO sacred threads running through Scripture.

One is a secret thread running through scripture, dealing with God's people. Starting in Genesis, all the way to Revelation, there is a connecting thread that ties us all together!!

There is the OTHER thread - the GOD story. The story of GOD Himself. This is the BIGGER story. It's the story of God!

So in Nehemiah, we have the people thread of COMMUNITY that lays the foundation for the God thread of REVIVAL.

If we don't learn to intertwine the two threads, if we don't learn to see one through the lens of the other, it's just another academic exercise.

ILLUS:

So in the course of this message watch for the two threads. What are the people doing in the little story. What's God doing in the big story.

Notice that the movement in the God's people story - temple worship and synagogue worship are being established. Rome is going to conquer the land. The Maccabees and other groups are going to revolt, creating the Pharisees and Sadducees and other sects you see in the New Testament. Here is God's big story - the return to the land so that Jesus the Messiah can be introduced. There is a 400-year silence in between the Old and New Testament. The voice of John the Baptizer bridging the two testaments and then the Gospel story that impacts time and eternity and brings a revival of God's Kingdom forever!

Now, the chronological events of how the people gathered and went back and came together and so on and so forth… it isn't fully clear in historical record and in commentaries. There are THREE festivals where Jews were required to come to Jerusalem - one of the three, the **festival of Sukkoth, or Booths**, occurred in the seventh month. And that's why Nehemiah refers to this in Ch. 7. You'll also see Ezra refer to another timeline both in his book and in Neh. Ch. 8. Let's not be confused by all this.

The big thing is that people are gathering in true worship, which ties in to how Pas. Randal launched this series - the return to the land and the return to worship. And the return to worship actually foreshadows the prophetic visions of the Messianic age, where all nations will celebrate the **Feast of Booths** (Zechariah 14:16-19)

But rather than working TOWARDS revival, I'd like to turn our passage upside down and work BACKWARDS from revival. In other words, rather than showing you how or when revival occurs, I'd like to show you what revival looks like in the life of a believer and in the life of the Church.

After the revival, a few pastors were discussing the results….

1. REVIVAL is about WATCHING, not WORKING

7:1-3 (LSB): Now it happened when the wall was rebuilt and I had made the doors to stand, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed, **2** that I commanded Hanani my brother and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, *to be* over Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. **3** Then I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem must not be opened until the sun is hot; and until they are *there* standing *guard*, they must shut and bolt the doors. Also have guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem stand, each at his post, and each in front of his own house."

The WORK is finished but the WATCH is just beginning.

Is there anyone else besides me who recalls a parallel story where the WORK was finished? Where it was said, "IT IS FINISHED"?

WE do not finish the requirements to be saved. JESUS did it. Salvation isn't a reward for the righteous, it's a fight for the guilty (Adrian Rogers)…So, we are saved by GRACE…. But that's just the beginning. We are to steward our salvation. To watch over it. To work it into our daily lives. To bring it forth in our interactions with others.

The WORK of salvation is finished but the WORKING OUT of our salvation is just getting started.

Look at what Nehemiah does… he ENTRUSTS the finished work to FAITHFUL men. And in the New Testament Paul says, entrust this to "FAITHFUL" men, who will.

2 Tim. 2:2 (AMP): The things [the doctrine, the precepts, the admonitions, the sum of my ministry] which you have heard me teach in the presence of many witnesses, entrust [as a treasure] to reliable and faithful men who will also be capable and qualified to teach others

Faithfulness is seen by WATCHFULNESS. Nehemiah put faithful people in charge of WATCHING. Vs. 3 - the "Gates must not be opened till noon" - why?

Why do WE watch? In what way do we experience PERSONAL REVIVAL when we watch?

When the signs of the end times happen, Jesus says LIFT UP YOUR EYES… keep watching… don't fall asleep….

ILLUS:

2. REVIVAL is about PEOPLE, not PROJECTS

Revival is not a moment, it's momentous.

At its core, revival is a PRESENT that ties the PAST and the FUTURE. And PEOPLE are the center of revival.

Look at Neh. 9:4-5 (LSB): **4** Then Jeshua rose up on the Levites' platform, *along* with Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and they cried out with a loud voice to Yahweh their God. **5** And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said, "Rise up, bless Yahweh your God from everlasting to everlasting!

Look at Nehemiah 7:5 (LSB):…. then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first, and in it I found written:

But then, among all these people, there's another non-kosher group.

And then, Neh. 7:64-65 (LSB): These searched *in* their genealogical records, but it could not be found; therefore they were considered unclean *and excluded* from the priesthood. **65** And the governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest stood with Urim and Thummim.

A way was made for these people - they were not forever excluded. In fact, if you look at the names and geneologies, you'll see both Jewish AND Babylonian names. We have to be careful about how we keep offenders from ministry. EXPL.

ILLUS:

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. This is so critical for even parents to remember.

It's the PEOPLE who are in focus.

Look at Neh.8:1 (LSB): And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they said to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which Yahweh had commanded to Israel.

Gathered "as one man" - unity; "…they said… to bring" - revival zeal

Neh. 7:70-72 (LSB): Some from among the heads of fathers' *households* gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 bowls, 530 priests' tunics. Some of the heads of fathers' *households* gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,200 silver minas. That which the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,000 silver minas and 67 priests' tunics.

The fact that this wasn't about projects is that ALL kinds of people gave to the project.

Personally - Did you know you can be in need and STILL have a mindset of giving?

2 Cor. 8: 2-3 (NIV): In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

What about the Parthians?

The names - the genealogies - it's all about PEOPLE.

Most people skip the first nine chapters of Chronicles. Long lists of names. But think who it was written for.

The Bible tells Solomon's story twice. WHY? Because the story is about PEOPLE, not PROGRAMS or PROJECTS.

3. REVIVAL is about WORD and SPIRIT, not the EXTERNALS

No two revivals are alike, but ALL revivals have ONE thing in common - the conviction of the Spirit through the Word.

How are the Word and the Spirit related?

Neh. 7:5 (LSB): Then my God put it into my heart, and I gathered the nobles, the officials, and the people to be recorded by genealogies.

This is the work of the Spirit.

Neh. 9:20 (LSB): You gave Your good Spirit to give them insight….

The reading occurs in the public square at the WATER GATE. Why the WATER gate? Did you know that WATER represents both the WORD and the SPIRIT, in scripture?

Eph. 5:26 (TLB)…. to make her holy, having cleansed her by immersion (by water) in the word…

Jesus, the INCARNATE Word, refers to Himself as "Living Water".

John 7:38-39 (LSB)…. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were going to receive…

The ancient practices are reestablished. They are getting back to true worship, a picture of the future "in spirit and in truth".

The response of repentance and confession. They are getting back to the Word in worship.

Neh. 9: 1-3 (LSB): Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel gathered with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. **2** The seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. **3** And they rose up in their place and read from the book of the law of Yahweh their God for a fourth of the day; and for *another* fourth they were confessing and worshiping Yahweh their God

The Word needs to be explained and understood. Ezra was a scribe and teacher. And yet, he used priests to explain things plainly to people. As teachers, our goal isn't just COMMUNICATION, it's COMPREHENSION.

Neh. 8:10 (LSB): Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength."

The response of joy to the sanctity of the day. There are ways to interpret this joy….."Joy is a word of various signification" (*The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*).

a. Holiness and joy go hand in hand. Righteousness and holiness are the greatest joy! (John Piper quote). Pleasing God gives us the greatest strength to continue in our Christian walk.
b. Passion and Joy energize even the most difficult of tasks. ILLUS - workplace. JOY is contagious. JOY is a choice. JOY is a fruit of the Spirit!
c. The "joy of the Lord" is a prepositional phrase translating to "the Lord's joy" - why is this so important? Look at Zeph. 3:17 (NASB): "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will rejoice over you with joy. It is the fact that the Lord rejoices over us that can give us strength (Heb. "fortified place").

The response of sharing with others. (ILLUS: lepers). There are so many ways in which we respond to God. But the MAIN IDENTIFIER is the conviction of the Holy Spirit that comes through the Word. Let me end today's message with a CALL TO ACTION.

CONCLUSION:

Closing ILLUS.

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few and the houses were not rebuilt.

What is MY part in getting this city populated again? Look around.