



Title: Thanksgiving, Process, and Providence (Nehemiah: week 14)

Text: Nehemiah 12:1-47

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Intro: In Nehemiah 12 we read about the dedication service for the completion of the wall. Fittingly, on this week before Thanksgiving, there is much for us to learn from this chapter about giving God thanks in spite of less than ideal circumstances and for His good hand of providence.

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I. GIVE THANKS WHILE IN PROCESS

The people had gathered to give God praise and Thanksgiving for the completion of the wall. God had been very good to this generation of Israel in allowing them to come back and rebuild the city after 141 years of failure and frustration. But, it is important to note that their situation was still less than perfect. They were still a captive and conquered people. Artaxerxes, a foreign Persian King was still their ruler. Yet, even though things were not as they ultimately should be or will be, the people gave God thanks.

Application: This parallel for us is obvious. We live in a broken world. We are walking in less the ideal circumstances due to our own rebellion and the fallen humanity. If we waited until the situation was ideal to rejoice in God, that moment would never come in this life. Therefore, we should unashamedly give God thanks in tragedy and triumph and every point in between.

II. GIVE THANKS FOR PROVIDENCE

Along the same lines, God could have hit the fast forward button and caused Israel to be where he wanted them to be. God could have taken care of the Persian Empire with a snap. In fact, he did rescue his people from Egypt generations before through his miraculous power. Yet, this time, for his sovereign purpose, he chose to let his people endure in their captivity in less than ideal circumstances for His purpose. In other words, he could have freed Israel again completely, but He didn't. Instead, they had to rebuild the city of Jerusalem while still being captive to the Persians.

Application: Clearly, God has redemptive purposes behind our suffering and less than ideal situations. Understanding the doctrine of Providence is an important step for maturity in Christ. Providence means that God controls everything and works out all things for His glory and the good of His people (Ephesians 1:11, Romans 8:28-29). And, everything either means all things to include evil and sin, or it means nothing at all. In a way that we will never understand on this earth, God superintends everything for His glory and our good. Realizing this truth should bring us to our knees in humility and worship.

III. GIVE THANKS FOR JESUS

None of this means anything with Jesus and his work on the Cross. Simply put, we can only be thankful because Jesus has brought us back to life through his life, death, burial, resurrection and victory over sin, death and all its consequences.

