

## Nehemiah 2

### 'Kairos Timing'

#### Introduction ...

Last week: **Ezra**

This week: **Nehemiah**

Probably both Old Testament books that we're not very familiar with.

**Ezra** – a scribe – a religious leader

**Nehemiah** – a Governor – but also a faithful Israelite

Both living, working, ministering in the time when Israelites were allowed to return from exile to Jerusalem.

Ezra started the process off – but with limited success. Nehemiah followed.

You may recall, from **Ecclesiastes 3**, the phrase '**There is a time to speak and a time to refrain from speaking**'...

Nehemiah followed the wisdom of that statement.

In **Chapter 1**, we're told that he hears a report of what is – and what is not – going on in Jerusalem. From other sources we know that this was in December 446 BC ... but Nehemiah does not speak to King Artaxerxes until the following March.

He bides his time ...

There are 2 words for 'time' in ancient languages. In Greek:

**Chronos time ... minute by minute, hour by hour**

**Kairos time ... the right moment**

Nehemiah waits for the Kairos moment.

But he does more than wait ...

He uses the waiting time to prepare what he is going to say ...

His speech is beautifully crafted and he knows exactly what he wants.

For example, knowing that Artaxerxes has previously issued a command forbidding building work in Jerusalem (**Ezra 4:21**) Nehemiah doesn't mention Jerusalem by name ... and knowing that it was an accepted duty in many cultures of that era to tend the graves of ancestors ... Nehemiah uses that kind of wording – '**to rebuild the city of my ancestors.**'

#### For Us ...

We are highly unlikely to be waiting to speak about something of national faith and life significance ... but we may often be longing to speak words to friends, family, colleagues ... perhaps a word of comfort, of reconciliation ... even of challenge.

If so – let's take this example of Nehemiah to heart.

**Wait** for the Kairos moment ...

**Prepare carefully** and prayerfully what you will say ...

**Pray** to God that you will recognise the Kairos moment and be able to seize it.

That 'sets us up' to work with God's Holy Spirit.

Life lived in this way – as Henri Nouwen wrote, means that:

**Time becomes not just something to get through,**

**or manage or manipulate.**

**Instead**

**time becomes the arena**

**of God's work with us.**

Amen.