

**The Four Pillars of Peaceful Social Action**  
**Sermon Outline**  
**September 23, 2018**

Text – **Nehemiah 5: 1-19**

Reading Schedule:

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>9/23</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 23; Nehemiah 5: 1-19</i>
<i>Monday</i>	<i>9/24</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 24; Nehemiah 6: 1-17</i>
<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>9/25</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 25; Nehemiah 1: 1-11</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>9/26</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 26; Nehemiah 2: 1-20</i>
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>9/27</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 27; Nehemiah 3: 1-32</i>
<i>Friday</i>	<i>9/28</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 28; Nehemiah 4: 1-23</i>
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>9/29</i>	<i>Proverbs Ch. 29; Exodus 5: 1-23</i>

**The Four Pillars of Peaceful Social Action**

**Nehemiah 5: 1-19**

Pastors and Faith Leaders met Thursday, September 20, 2018, in Chicago to participate in a contingency planning session in advance of a verdict in the trial of Jason Van Dyke, the Chicago police officer charged with the murder of seventeen-year-old Laquan McDonald in 2014. There are actions we can take toward effecting justice in the verdict and in seeing peace in the City of Chicago.

Rev. Will Calloway, a community activist who is involved in leading twenty community groups, shared that Holy Spirit gave him “Four Pillars of Peaceful Social Action”. He came to your Pastor at Quinn Chapel to enlist his participation in bringing the community groups and church leaders together in unity because God has a better way than violence, destruction of property, and destruction of lives.

**GOD HAS A BETTER WAY!**

1. **Rapid mobilization**
2. **Sustainable demonstration**
3. **Legislative changes**
4. **Media influence and shaping the narrative**

After Thursday night's meeting, Holy Spirit led me to Nehemiah Chapter 5, instructing me to instruct you, and to share with Rev. Will Calloway, the Scripture undergirding what Holy Spirit shared with him. The story of Nehemiah being used by God to address the injustices in Jerusalem at the time of the rebuilding of its walls lends clarity to how God over millennia has righted wrongs in society. There is a lesson for us all as we face the outcomes of the Van Dyke trial.

**GOD HAS A BETTER WAY!**

## **RAPID MOBILIZATION**

1. **Nehemiah 5: 1-5** – *Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews.<sup>2</sup> Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”<sup>3</sup> Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields,<sup>(A)</sup> our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”<sup>4</sup> Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax<sup>(C)</sup> on our fields and vineyards.<sup>5</sup> Although we are of the same flesh and blood<sup>(D)</sup> as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery.<sup>(E)</sup> Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”*
2. When there is injustice – Do Something About It
  - a. The people got together and expressed their “outcry against their fellow Jews.”

- b. So often we don't recognize the power we have in coming together to simply "speak up!"
  - i. We become frustrated and angry, even violent, when we believe we are powerless to change our circumstances.
  - ii. The citizens of Jerusalem came together and organized their voices to collectively "speak up!"
- c. "What is that in your hand, Moses?"
  - i. Look around the room. There is power to organize and move out to express our desire for Peaceful Social Action in Chicago!
  - ii. We already have everything we need, and more!
- d. Exercise our power! Organize! **SPEAK UP!**

## **SUSTAINABLE DEMONSTRATION**

1. Nehemiah 5: 6-11 – *When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. <sup>7</sup> I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are charging your own people interest!"<sup>(G)</sup> So I called together a large meeting to deal with them <sup>8</sup> and said: "As far as possible, we have bought<sup>(H)</sup> back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.<sup>(I)</sup> <sup>9</sup> So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach<sup>(J)</sup> of our Gentile enemies? <sup>10</sup> I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest!<sup>(K)</sup> <sup>11</sup> Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest<sup>(L)</sup> you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil."*
2. *What makes any effort sustainable is the foundation it rests on.*

- a. Nehemiah took the “MORAL HIGH GROUND”!
- b. *“What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach<sup>(D)</sup> of our Gentile enemies?”*
- c. When criticized by detractors, 1st Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama responded by saying, “Take the high ground!”
  - i. She showed her arms. “Take the high ground!”
  - ii. She’s dancing with kids. “Take the high ground!”
  - iii. She’s exercising on TV. “Take the high ground!”
  - iv. There’s a lesson for us in all this. Would you like to know what the lesson is? It is, “Take the high ground!”
- d. Throughout modern history, effective peaceful social action has always been established based on what those seeking change and those opposing change recognized as truth.
- e. Please note: *“Folk don’t do the right thing because it’s right. Folk do the right thing because it cost them to much not to!”*  
(US Congressman Danny K. Davis)
  - i. The Montgomery Bus Boycott brought the subject of racial segregation to the forefront of American politics. The boycott lasted for over a year. It finally ended on December 20, 1956 after 381 days.
  - ii. This boycott would economically impact the government because since people were boycotting buses which are funded by the local government of Montgomery, the government would be getting less money from the consumers who normally used their buses.
  - iii. The boycott economically impacted businesses as well. It did this through the way that since less people were

riding buses the businesses in charge of said buses may have to lay some people off.

iv. Sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks on 1 December 1955, the Montgomery bus boycott was a 13-month mass protest that ended with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses is unconstitutional.

f. Those who make decisions that affect lives must be influenced by our sustained efforts that articulate, change is also to their benefit.

## LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

i. **Nehemiah 5: 12-13** – *“We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath(M) to do what they had promised. <sup>13</sup> I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So, may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.*

ii. Laws that institutionalize injustice must be changed.

a. Nehemiah did not stop at a promise from the nobles to change their unjust behavior, he institutionalized the changes by bringing the priests, the nobles and the people together.

i. When taken in front of the priests and the people the oath of the nobles became a self-made curse of poverty on those who were taking advantage of others for greed’s sake.

ii. Nehemiah defined the curse of poverty on the nobles when he said, *“In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this*

*promise. So, may such a person be shaken out and emptied!”*

- iii. The people of the assembly saying “amen” ratified the curse, thereby establishing accountability through the new law accepted by all!
- b. We can’t legislate morality, but we can legislate behavior.
  - i. Attitudes may not change, but actions can
  - ii. Clear expectations can be established and just penalties imposed for those who choose to violate the rights of others.
- c. Even with a guilty verdict in the Van Dyke trial, effective peaceful social action doesn’t end there.
  - i. Ordinances must be passed that protect the police officers who are upholding their oath to serve and protect the public.
  - ii. Judicial power must be applied to enforce the laws in place.
  - iii. We’re just getting started!
- d. Candidates will come to churches all over America to encourage citizens to vote them into office.
  - i. So many of us today say, “What’s the use? I’m so tired of being used, I’m just pulling out of the whole voting thing!”
  - ii. When candidates can’t find their way to your neighborhood after the election is over, don’t you pull out; vote someone else in.
  - iii. When African Americans make up nearly 30% of Chicago’s population but receive less than 8% of City contracts, don’t you pull out; vote someone else in.

- iv. When 50 schools are closed in your neighborhood and nothing is done to REPURPOSE CLOSED SCHOOLS and use them for programs that benefit our communities, don't you pull out; vote someone else in.
- v. When ECONOMIC INVESTMENT on the SOUTH & WEST SIDES for decades has not been commensurate to downtown and north side, don't you pull out; vote someone else in.
- vi. When RESOURCES FOR ANTIVIOLENCE INITIATIVES don't find their way into Black-led programs, don't you pull out; vote someone else in.
- vii. When COMMUNITY-LED RENEGOTIATION OF FOP CONTRACT that protects rights of police officers and civilians doesn't take place, don't you pull out, vote someone else in.
- viii. ANTI-RECIDIVISM LEGISLATION is not passed that requires companies that buy labor of those incarcerated to hire them when they're released, don't you pull out; vote someone else in.

## **MEDIA INFLUENCE AND SHAPING THE NARRATIVE**

- i. **Nehemiah 5: 19** – Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people.
  - a. The keys to this passage are found in identifying who is speaking and what they're saying!
  - b. Opponents of justice will attempt to frame the narrative through accusations, discredit, or intimidation.
  - c. **Nehemiah 6:5-8** - *Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter in which was written: "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to*

*become their king and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: 'There is a king in Judah!' Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together." I sent him this reply: "Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head."*

- d. When others attempt to frame the narrative, we have only to speak up and tell the story ourselves.
- e. Use example of Colin Kaepernick's effort to bring attention to the matter of the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers when addressing African American citizens now framed as dishonoring the flag, dishonoring the military, or hatred for our country.
- f. Let's tell the story ourselves: Because I've been participating in "NFL BLACKOUT" all season long, I hadn't noticed how little I missed watching NFL games.
- g. Colin Kaepernick, "GQ Magazine's Citizen of the Year - 2017" took a courageous stand by kneeling to bring attention to the inequitable use of deadly force in situations involving African Americans. HE HAS SUFFERED RETALIATION FOR HIS EFFORTS! "Black Balling" persons who bring attention to injustice is a tried and proven tactic for silencing the masses.

As a pastor of a predominantly African American Congregation and Community, father of three African American adults, grandfather of seven children of mixed race, and as surrogate father or grandfather to dozens, I want to express my personal gratitude to every person who has joined in the "NFL BLACKOUT", THANK YOU!

On behalf of the deceased, Sandra Bland and Yahree Jamaal Cavin, with whom I have personal connections, THANK YOU!

On behalf of the slain and their loved ones, (The link lists

only a few.) [https://www.buzzfeed.com/nicholasquah/heres-a-timeline-of-unarmed-black-men-killed-by-police-over?utm\\_term=.fpjeXGVgX#.ebEYJmB3J](https://www.buzzfeed.com/nicholasquah/heres-a-timeline-of-unarmed-black-men-killed-by-police-over?utm_term=.fpjeXGVgX#.ebEYJmB3J). THANK YOU!

On behalf of all of the law enforcement officers who have wanted attention placed on this injustice, THANK YOU!

On behalf of the NFL players who needed public support to bring attention to public injustice, THANK YOU!

On behalf of other loyal, patriotic Americans who honor our flag and those in military service and love this country and choose to make it work for all of its citizens, THANK YOU!  
THANK YOU for continuing "NFL BLACKOUT!"

Pastor Moody

- h. Just as Nehemiah is telling the story himself, we must tell the story ourselves.
  - i. The person who is initiating the change is the person telling the story of the change.
  - ii. WE WRITE THE NARRATIVE!
  - iii. WE ARE GOD'S INSTRUMENT, USED TO DEFINE THE OUTCOMES OF THE STORY
  - iv. When there is injustice – Do Something About It
  - v. We “Take the high ground!” for sustainable demonstration
  - vi. We change laws that institutionalize injustice

**PRAYER FOR PEACEFUL, EFFECTIVE SOCIAL ACTION**