TWO CITIES CHURCH

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

What Are You Missing by Just Going to Church?

Nehemiah 3

PASTOR KYLE MERCER · NOVEMBER 8, 2026

SERIES: BUILT TO LAST

About 11 years ago, when I was preparing to plant this church, somebody came into my life and asked me this question about the church. I had never thought this before. They said, how do you want the church that you're going to plant, how do you want that church to feel? Well, I knew I didn't want it to feel like the DMV, right? Definitely.

It's like, what do I want it to feel like? And we said a lot of different things. We said, we want it to be all that we do to be done in an environment of prayer and worship. So at one level, the answer is what do we want our church to feel like a place of prayer and worship.

But at a deeper level, lives that have been transformed by Jesus. And here's what that means. We all have a lot of stories.

This is what we want. We want you to have stories of God using you in the life of other people. What you heard was a story of destiny.

Really, by the way, her story is kind of more of a longer, more dramatic version of what happens to a bunch of different people when they come here. Somebody meets them, somebody loves on them, somebody sits with them. By the way, you never know each week who you're sitting next to at any of our campuses.

Then somebody begins to invest relationally. Destiny ends up coming to faith in Christ. Then she has real needs because we're not just souls.

We're bodies in communities that live in homes and apartments. And so a community group comes alongside, meets her needs in Jesus' name. And now she's serving in our kids' ministry.

Can I get an amen? Amen. It's great. Okay.

So today, that's what we're going to talk about. In just a minute, you can turn to. Nehemiah chapter three.

We're going to be talking today about serving. What does it look like for each of you to find your place of purpose, building your section of what we'll see today, the wall. Okay.

So in Nehemiah, it's all about building this wall. And today, each person, each family, each group, each individual finds their section. Guys, we are in what's called, if you're brand new, I just want to let you know.

And you're like, what is this? And they gave me a really nice book when I came in here. We are in a unique five-week sermon series. Also what we're calling the Built to Last Initiative.

It's all about how we're building places to better build people. And inside is a commitment card.

And just so you know, we have two goals in this initiative, 100% participation.

That means everybody at every campus, every family, every student, every individual who calls Two Cities Church home would have an experience with the grace of God that would transform their hearts and make them more generous. And then we have a second goal, which is to raise at least $10 million in one-time gifts above and beyond normal tithes and offerings before the end of the year. So what's interesting is that even though a large part of what we're doing is, well, raising at least $10 million, even though we are in the middle of a financial initiative, what I'm going to uniquely talk to you today about is not so much being in with your treasure, that certainly has implications, but really what does it look like for you to be in with your time and your talent? Okay.

So we're going to talk about serving and how really, maybe this is a good way to think about it. We all need to do the ordinary for God to do the extraordinary. A lot of our lives are not as extraordinary as we wish they are.

It's doing ordinary things, serving in kids' ministry, opening a door for someone, serving your own family. But it's in the midst of doing the ordinary that God loves to do the extraordinary. So let me pray.

And then we're going to get to work in Nehemiah chapter three, maybe the least preached chapter in the book of Nehemiah. We'll see how it goes. Lord, in Jesus' name, we come to you and we ask that you would just give us servant hearts, that we would be in any area, this is way bigger than serving on a ministry team in a church, that the way that we relate to people, our family members, our friends, our neighbors, is we are primarily here to serve them, not to be served.

Lord, would you help us to realize that the main way that we practically serve you, God, is by serving people made in your image. Would you do a great work in us, Lord, in a culture that wants to, more than anything, figure out how to be served. Would you give us hearts to serve? In Christ's name, amen.

Well, we live in the age of the spectator, right? We are always watching something, usually through a screen. Think about your life and how much you interact with a screen, usually watching something. Now, it's hard because as they've tried to do studies, it's not as easy as you would think to try to figure out how much time do you spend on a screen, partly because there's so many screens.

Right? Think about it. I mean, there's the screen that you have at work, your office, right? Or your computer you carry with you. And then there is the screen that you sit at home when you get home, and that screen's pretty big.

It's a TV. But then there is the middle screen, right? That would be your tablet, right? And then there is the little screen. That's a lot of screens.

In fact, with some people, they found out that they are on screens more than they're awake. Now, how's that possible? They're on two screens at the same time. Think about this with me for a second.

We are so screen-saturated. Have you ever been watching TV, and you're like, that's enough of that screen? And then you bring your phone up? Right? Have you done that before? You're like, this is, I'm not watching a movie on a laptop. Let me grab my iPad.

We literally relax from screens with screens. Now, here's the problem. You and I spend an enormous amount of time on those screens watching other people do things.

We're all excited about Wake football, okay? That's great. But just in general, how much time do we spend watching other people play sports or watching other people, the obsession with the documentary, the multi-five-season-long series? I wish you were obsessed with our sermon series. You're not, okay? Series, okay? And so here's what I'm trying to say.

I don't even know. I'm just kind of putting it out there. What happens, because we're really the first generation to just watch.

And when we're not watching a movie or a show or sports, we're watching other people's lives. We're watching other people work on their marriage and work out and build their homes. And okay, it is time.

Here's the big idea today. It is time for us to move from spectators to participators, from the sidelines to the front lines, okay? And we're all in different places here. So this is not to beat you up, but to build you up, okay? We're all at different places in kind of our perspective and ability to serve and where we are and how we're serving.

But the church is meant not to be an audience, but an army, right? And an audience is meant to be entertained. And an army is meant to be equipped. And so part of what I'm going to try to do today is equip us, okay? Because here's what we've done.

It really kind of is easy to follow, I think. Chapter one is about what? Well, having a burden and beliefs. That's Nehemiah one, if you've been following.

Nehemiah two is about having clarity and courage. And then this one is finding your place and finding your purpose is chapter three. So I'm going to read you.

We're just really going to read a couple of verses out of chapter three. It's 32 verses. But when you read this, if you open up, okay, if you're reading through the Bible and you get to Nehemiah chapter three, I guarantee you, if you're doing Bible in a year, you're flipping over to the audio Bible and putting it on 2X.

Because guys, it's just a bunch of names. It's 38 names. It's, I think, 42 different groups of people.

It is 10 different names of the gates. I mean, we can't pronounce most of it. It's like flipping over a Cheez-It box and trying to read the ingredients.

You want to, but you can't pronounce them. So I'm going to do this like one time. I'm just going to read the first five verses.

And you know, even though I speak for a living, I still struggle to read. Okay. So here we go.

Okay. We're going to do it together. And then we're going to talk about this.

Here it is. Then Eliashib. Now I know how to say that name.

Okay. He's the high priest. We're going to focus on him now.

Then Eliashib. The high priest rose up with his brothers, the priests, and they built the sheep gate. By the way, they're going to build 10 different gates.

They consecrated it. That's the only gate they consecrate. And set its doors.

They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the tower of Hananel. And next to him, the men of Jericho built. And next to them, Zaccur, the son of Imri built.

Now look at verses three through five. Okay. I want to call on somebody here.

You read verse three. Okay. You know what I'm saying? Here's what you do.

By the way, if you don't know how to pronounce something, you just read it quickly and confidently and everyone will assume that's how you pronounce it. Okay. So the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate.

They laid its beams. They set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. The next was Meremoth, the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, repaired.

And next to him, Meshullam. Ma, there's an M there too. The son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired.

And next to them... Here we go. I know this one. Zadok.

There you go. The son of Baana repaired. And next to them, the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord.

Okay. So here's what we're going to do. We're going to talk about this for a while, because a bunch of people... Again, I was being silly, but I'm not going to read you all 32 verses, but there's a lot of individual names mentioned.

I want you to notice a couple of interesting things. First of all, God knows who serves. As our

church has gotten bigger, and this was really one sense of problem from day one, but if you just let me talk for just a second about my experience.

As the church has gotten bigger, one of the things that I don't like about it is I'm not able to personally thank everybody who serves. When our church was small and when we had a launch team, I was able like, man, I want to thank you. And actually, I want to give you a specific thank you because I specifically know your unique contribution to serving in our church, and I don't for all of us today.

But here's what I can say, God knows. In fact, every person's name and the details of who they worked with and what they built, that's all there. Here's another interesting thing.

God's name is not mentioned in chapter 3. So, you know, in chapter 1, there's lots of prayer. In chapter 2, there's prayer. There's vision.

We're going to do this for God and for His kingdom. And then we get to chapter 3, and God's not mentioned at all. It's because God, a lot of times, works silently and secretly through people.

You know, Augustine said this. Augustine, he was this, you know, famous Christian from the past. That's really all you need to know.

Here's what he said. He said, without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.

I think that's pretty good. Let me say it again. He says, without God, we cannot.

So that's our perspective. Without God, we can't do anything. But without us, He won't.

He will not. God loves us. And so what you're going to see is today, as we kind of look through this, you're going to see just the ordinary, everyday, you know, people, the perfumers and the goldsmiths and this guy's family and this guy and his two daughters and everybody, and everybody's just finding their place on the wall.

So I'm going to just try to give us a few principles of serving. And when I'm talking about serving, yes, I am, in one level, I'm talking about a serving team here in our church. But I'm talking about way bigger than that, the heart that you have, hopefully, to serve other people everywhere you go, okay? So, and what we're going to see is one of the main ways that we build is by serving.

That's the whole idea. Here's the first thing that I want you to know about serving. The most time wasted is the time getting started.

When it comes to serving and building, the most time wasted is the time getting started. I tell my kids this all the time. I say this to our staff all the time.

Do you know how long it took to start building this wall? 140 years. Okay, so let's just go, what was happening 140 years ago today, roughly? Well, Grover Cleveland was president. And Coca-

Cola would not be invented for six more months.

And the Statue of Liberty was just given as a gift. And the automobile had never been seen in America yet. There was like a version of it, but I mean, that was 140 years ago.

Now, here's what's interesting. Once they start building, how long do you think it took to build the wall? Well, it tells us later in the book, so I'll read it for you. 52 days.

So then I thought, well, 52 days, that's how long it took. And so then I thought this, I thought, well, that would be really interesting. I wonder what 52 days from tomorrow is.

Answer, I couldn't have planned this. December 31st, end of our initiative. Praise the Lord.

We got 52 days to build, okay? Yeah, that's right. And then like two more years after that, but let's just focus on the 52. Okay, now, what do we do instead of build? What do we do instead of serving? Let me give you a couple of things.

We talk about serving. We talk about building. Have you noticed that we love to talk about all the things that we want to do, but we never do them? So one of the most influential, and you should look this up and you should read this with your community group.

There is a famous article, it's like a, it's a fake article, but it's to prove a point, like it's a fictitious article. But the article is called, in fact, I'd be interested, just raise your hand, I can only see you obviously at our Winston-Salem campus. Raise your hand if you've ever read the article, The Fisherless Fisherman.

I just want to see if anyone's ever read this. Okay, you guys, only a couple of us. You're going to love this article.

So this article is basically, it's a critique on the church by a Christian, like lovingly. And The Fisherless Fisherman is a story about a bunch of fishermen who do everything but fish. It is, you read it is so convicting.

They go to, they go to fishermen conferences and they know everything about the fish. They've studied the fish and they know everything about the best type of bait that, you know, and actually the story goes that one guy catches two fish and he becomes so famous that he does conference speaking all over about those two fish

and never goes fishing again. And it ends with the question, are you a fisherman if you never go fishing? We love to talk about it.

We love to, and now, and if you're in Christian circles, instead of serving, instead of building, this is, this is the Christianese. You love to say you're praying about it. It's interesting, last week I was talking to a guy, this always happens, something from my sermon, someone gives me even a better insight.

And I'm like, could you have told me this before the 9am? So, you know, like I talked last week on clarity, you know, and courage. And I had one of the guys said, you know what my experience has been, most times people have clarity. Sorry, most times people, yeah, most times people have clarity, they don't have courage, but it's more embarrassing to admit you don't have courage.

So people say they don't have clarity. The truth is most people know what they need to do. They now need the courage to do it.

So in Christian circles, you can say you're praying about it, all this other stuff. So now look, it takes them 140 years. That means multiple generations, lived, grew up, died in the walls and rubble.

Finally, Nehemiah shows up and they build the wall in 52 days. Okay. So the first thing I want you to know is the most time wasted is the time getting started.

The second thing I want you to know is some things need built and other things need repaired. So I don't, I won't, if you want to go through it's like, it'd be a neat study. I mean, with AI, you could do this in just a few seconds, but if you look at your version of Nehemiah chapter three, you're going to realize that the word built is only used eight times.

And the word repair or repaired is used like 35 to 38 times, depending on your translation. Why? Because few things in your life need built and most things in your life need repaired. Think about it.

We're actually told specifically, if you, again, if you read Nehemiah chapter three, well, what comes before it is Nehemiah chapter one and two. And in it, remember the

news he gets, the wall is broken down and the gates are destroyed by fire. Oh, the gates were made of wood.

So they were completely destroyed. So they need to be completely rebuilt. But most of the wall just needed to be repaired.

Okay. You need to build something if you've never had it before, or it's been completely destroyed. Now here's the interesting things.

Okay. So some, you're a brand new Christian. There's just some things you're going to have to build.

I'm going to build a prayer life. I don't have one, right? You don't have one. So I got to build it.

I got to build a devotional life. I've got to build a generous heart. There's a lot of things that you, along with God does in your heart, you build these things.

And then here's the other interesting thing, you know, and you know this, if you've lived any life,

like so many of the things that are the most important things that you'll ever do, you only get to do them hopefully one time. Like be a parent and be a husband and be a wife and get married and have a career. It's like, well, these are all, I better learn how to build because I've never done this before.

But here's the thing. Most things in your life need repaired. Part of what I, here's what it means.

It means that when they showed up to the wall, they looked around and they realized everything I need to build the wall is right here. It's just fallen off. It's just broken down.

And all I need to do is take all these things that are already here and I need to put them together. In other words, often it's the reorganizing and the reprioritizing of your life. Let me, let me tell you three things you might need to repair in your life.

Something that is broken, something that is bent, or something that could be better. You know, how do you know if you have something broken in your life? Well, think about it this way. Almost every American home, at least at some point, has that broken cabinet that you have to be a part of the family to understand how to close it.

Right? You know, I'm talking to you're like, yeah, okay, well, all you do is you kind of lift it and you pull it and then you slam it. Right? It's like that thing is broke, but here's what happens. When something in your life is broken, often you found a way around it.

You found a way to kind of make it work. Sometimes it's a marriage where you can't have certain conversations and anyway, you've got to figure out, we don't have time for all this, but just to think, okay, what in my life or in the life of somebody I love is broken? Hopefully that breaks my heart and I want to, you know, something that's bent, in other words, out of order. So much, so much of life, you know, you've got to go, okay, how's my schedule? How's my budget? How do I just bring order? I was talking to a family recently and they were talking about how much they love, long road trips.

Now, I don't know about you. I'm not the biggest fan of really long road trips. You know, I think God gave us airplanes for a reason.

You know what I'm saying? I don't, I don't really want to be, I kind of have a personal rule. If I'm driving however many hours I'm driving, I actually learned this from my son, he came up with this. Dad, however many hours we drive should be how many nights we're staying.

So if I'm driving five hours, I want to be there for five nights kind of thing. Anyway, so I'm talking to a family in our church and they said, oh, we absolutely love road trips and we just, and I said, well, what do you think that is? And they said, I think it's been a strong dining room table for a long time. That we have just really prioritized the relationship that we have with one another so that when we go on a trip for a long period of time, we're actually excited to be in the car with one

another and to talk about a lot of different things together.

Sometimes something is, we just need different priorities and then sometimes something could just be better. Okay. So the first thing is I want you to know, okay, we're supposed to, the most time wasted is time getting started.

Okay. Second thing is some things need built, some things need repaired. We want to serve in both those areas.

The third is leaders must go first. Do you see in verse one, Eliashib is the high priest. And I don't know, we don't know for sure why everybody after him is in the order that they are.

You could say, well, maybe it's partly how the city was designed or the gate structure, but we do know that there's no doubt the high priest was put there first for a reason. And it's because leaders have to go first. Okay.

You can't, if you're like, particularly we'll just talk to moms and dads. Like if you, nobody grows up, I'm sorry, nobody, no parents go, you know what? I really hope that my kids grow up to be selfish and stingy. Nobody ever wants that.

Well, how do you get your kids from, you know, selfish and stingy, which would be the natural condition of the human heart coming in the world to being, you know, generous and servant hearted. It's like, well, you're going to have to lead the way. So here's the thing.

The high priest is the most influential spiritual leader in the nation of Israel. And we're told that he serves and his brother serves, who would have also been the priest. In other words, you know, you know this, but no church will rise above its leaders, right? No kids above their parents.

I mean, no employees above their bosses. You know, you, as a leader, you don't just want, you're not the thermometer, you're the thermostat. So let me, let me talk about what this looks like here.

So we are, all of our staff, all of our elders, before we were going to go and talk about this build to last initiative, I wanted to, I wanted to talk to all of them and just go before we do this, like, are we, is everybody here all in to lead the way in this? And then for

me, you know, I just knew, man, I can't get, I personally can't get up on stage and talk about the build to last initiative and all that we're doing until I've at least decided in my heart, talking to Margie, okay, we're going to give no less than this, which is still the biggest gift we've ever given. Like I had to, I had to settle in my heart. Here's like, I can't take people somewhere that I've not been.

And I just want to encourage you. I just want you here's the best way I share this with the guys at the men's night, but I'll just share it with all of us. Cause a lot of the guys couldn't be there.

And ladies, it's good for all of us to hear this. A key phrase to being a leader. Cause some of us just, we need to lean, learn leadership.

Like we were not natural leaders. And so some of us need to learn leadership. Like you learned your multiplication tables.

You just need to memorize it. Okay. So here's, if you want to be a better leader tomorrow, here's what you do.

You start saying the phrase, let's, let's pray about that. Let's go on a walk. Let's make a budget.

Let's get connected to a community group. Let's, let's serve over spring break and go on a mission. You just, you know, you're, you start saying that your family's going to be like, what is going on? This is incredible.

But not only do leaders go first, everybody needs to find their place of service. Okay. So part of what we're trying to do here is we're trying to build a strong volunteer culture.

And it's because this is why I want you to genuinely believe this serving is not first a church need. It's first a discipleship need. It's part of what God is going to work in you, change you, transform you.

But when you see, if you read, if you read the whole passage, if you just skim it, maybe you have your Bible in front of you right now. What you're going to see is a

bunch of different names. And then you're going to see this phrase, you're going to see one phrase again and again and again.

It's next to him, next to him, next to her, next to, after. The most common phrase used in chapter three of Nehemiah is the phrase next to or after him. Or, you know, that kind of phrase, next to him, after him.

And it's this, in 32 verses, the phrase is used 31 times. Because here's what I want you to know. Nobody works alone.

Everybody has their place. But here's what, here's the truth. After we're told about all the different places that there are to serve.

And by the way, in our, in our church, let me just tell you about a couple of the places that you could serve. Some of you already are serving, but I want to talk to you. So if you, if you read chapter three and you see all the different gates and you're like in the different, what does this place get? I want to first talk about kids ministry.

And if you want to find a verse for it in Nehemiah chapter three, it would be the dung gate. Okay. In the sense of there's a lot of changing diapers and everything.

Here's the thing. When I want you to understand what we do in kids ministry, and I want you to know that we always need more people to serve. And listen, I'm not, whenever I talk about serving here, I'm just going to be completely, because I've gone back and forth and I've talked about it one way and the other way.

And I've just decided I'm talking about it both ways every time, which is need and opportunity. All the books I read tell me never talk about need. It makes your church sound weak.

It makes you sound like you don't talk about need, just only talk about opportunity. It's like, well, I'll tell you, we got both. When it comes to kids ministry, it's like, listen, we'll get into this, but there is a need and there is an opportunity to think about this.

First of all, I want you to know that our kids ministry is not childcare. Now, if you're new, you might think of childcare and that's fine. You know, cause what you think is this is so great.

There's this hallway where I drop my kids off and everyone's wearing blue t-shirts and they just, they, you know, and we'll say this, they watch my kids. That's, you know, it's child, they babysit. It's like, okay, that's not what we're doing.

Now, let me say part of what they do is they do serve you and they do have a heart to serve mom and dad, especially usually young mom in the family who would otherwise be completely overwhelmed with her life in the service. Wouldn't watch the video, couldn't take notes, couldn't worship. We'll be trying to give Cheerios and Goldfish.

You know what I'm saying? And so it does that, but here's what we're doing. We are, here's how I would invite you. It's like, do you want to be a part of kids ministry? Do you want to serve in kids ministry? Here's what you'll get to do.

Minister to the largest group of non-Christians who shows up to our church each week. Amazing. Here's what you'll get to do.

You'll get to shape the heart of a seven-year-old and how they begin to see and understand God. You're going to have the opportunity to actually, you know, when you walk in there every week, you know, those of us who serve or drop our kids off, it says, meet Jesus and make friends. And you get to see those things happen.

Think about our student ministry. Our student ministry is just another huge place of service and where we have need. Our student ministry, when you think about it, middle schoolers and high schoolers, something I'm going to get the stat wrong, but something like 80 to 90 percent of people who will give their life to Christ will do so before they're 18.

And you know what's interesting? It's like, okay, you know what they, I just was rereading about this and it was really helpful. Okay. So kids who walk with God after high school versus kids

who don't walk with God after high school, but they were in a church.

The difference is I used to tell you, it's one thing I used to say, it's that they had somebody in their life who wasn't their mom and dad who invested in them. And that's still true. So this is a, you just want to know this.

Like you want to know this before you need to know this. You want to be like, okay, I've got, maybe you have like a 11-year-old and an eight-year-old and you go, here's what they need. They need somebody else in their life who's not me before they leave, who's got the same values.

But I also want to say this to you. How many of you, that could be you for somebody else, somebody else's kid. But then here's the other thing that they need.

This is really interesting. They need, the other thing that made a difference in kids' lives that go off to college and still walk with God, they found a place of Christian service in the church while they were in middle school and high school. So all of a sudden they, and by the way, do you know that we have over 100 of the people who serve in kids are students from our student ministry.

Let's give them a round of applause. Isn't that incredible? Yes. Here's another area.

There are, if you read again, Nehemiah chapter three, you read a lot about gates and a lot about locks, gates and locks, gates and locks. It makes me think about basically our biggest serving ministry team, which is our first impressions slash our safety team. Think about gates.

It's what you heard in the story. This is welcome tent and greeters and ushers and everybody who practices organizational hospitality. But then it makes me think of the safety team, those who protect us, that let everything happen here.

So one of the first times I went and spoke at this really big church I was speaking at, I had never had before that point, I never had a safety team. So I get there and they give me these two guys that are on my safety team and they literally follow, it's kind of, I didn't know how all this worked. They followed me to the bathroom and everything like that.

And they were so proud to be the safety team. And I was asking them some questions and I said, well, tell me about what you guys do here. And they said, we're the safety team.

And I said, yeah, can you, and they said, you know how, they said, does your church have a first impressions team? And I said, yeah. He goes, we're the last impressions team. He said, because if anybody messes with anybody, we will be the last person they ever see.

I love the ownership there to protect and care for the church. Here's the thing though, verse five is very interesting. There's so much need, right? There's so much need in the church, but it says the

nobles, verse five, would not stoop to serve.

There is always a group of people who will not serve. And you don't, you know, it's like, why wouldn't they stoop to serve? It's like, well, maybe they were, you know, maybe it's pride, I don't know. But here's what I do know.

I looked up, why don't people serve? And I didn't just look at it in our church. I looked nationally. Why do people self-report, right? And they never say it because I'm prideful.

They wouldn't, you know, they wouldn't say that. So I'm like, okay, what would be the other reasons that, I think you're going to find this interesting. What would be the other reasons that people don't serve? Because here's the thing.

Do you know, I'm going to get this again, give me grace with some of my stats, maybe I'm a little off, but it's something like when the national unemployment rate reaches 7% in America, it's considered a major crisis. But when half the church doesn't serve, everyone thinks it's normal. You know, one of the questions you could ask is if everybody served like you, what would happen? And some might be like, well, man, a ton would get done.

And others might say not. Let me tell you three reasons why people don't serve in no particular order. One is some version of fear or insecurity.

I get it. You know, who am I going to meet? What am I going to have to do? What are they going to ask of me? Am I going to have, am I going to be good with kids? Is this going to be awkward? Do I have to learn new skillsets? It's like, I just want you to know that we're going to come alongside you the whole way. I want you to know that.

We're, you know, come to our weekender. We're going to help you shadow. We're not going to like throw you in the deep end.

Okay. But let me give you the second reason, which I think is the number one reason that people don't serve. And this is what they say, that they are too busy.

I just want you to know, okay, I'm not here to guilt you, but I just want you to know this, that every person you saw in the parking lot, helping you park today is as busy as you. And every worker that when you, anyone who's got their kids in the kids ministry and they dropped them off, every person who works in there, serves in there is as busy as you. And I've been, by the way, I've been to the student ministry because my kids are in it.

It's like, man, you know, you meet, it's not a bunch of, I don't know who you think is serving in our student ministry every Wednesday night for three hours. Do you think it's a bunch of people who are like unemployed? Oh, that's what all the unemployed people do. They should know that these people have real jobs and they're getting up at 6.30 in the morning the next day and they're barreling in from work, grabbing, you know, chick-fil-a so they can have something to eat so they

can engage kids for our students for three hours.

Here's the thing about, I just want to let you know about being busy. Okay. It never goes away.

You're always going to be busy, right? But everybody finds time, everybody finds time for what they decide matters. Let me say it again. Everybody finds time for what they decide matters.

See, here's what happens. A lot of people, this is, you know, pick on the young families for a while, okay? Because this is what young families do especially. Young families get completely overwhelmed the moment they have a kid.

It's almost like you just put mute on their whole life. Mute you for about 15 years. And then they basically say some version of this, well, man, I really can't serve while I have kids in the house.

It's like, okay, so for 22 to 25 years? You know, it's like, I don't, I think that's an excuse. And do not believe the lie that you'll be able to serve in a different season. It doesn't work, okay? Because basically, I know it happens.

Like you have little kids and you're like, oh, they're pooping everywhere, they're not sleeping, they're throwing up. This is, you know, this is so hard. It's like, this is not the hard part yet.

You're not there yet. I promise you. And then you're like, oh, no, it's the toddlers.

I'm protecting them from hurting themselves all the time. This has got to be the hard part. And all the parents of teenagers go, you're not at the hard part yet.

It just gets harder. It just gets busier. It just gets different.

And then all of a sudden they're out of the house and you're like, well, now, you know, we really deserve because, you know, we're empty nesters. And so we're going to, and then that season, and then you, then that's over. And then now the grandkids and you, it's like, and you never serve.

The third is, so the first is fear. The second is busyness. The third is bad experience.

Okay. And I'm sorry if for some reason you had a bad experience in our church. We are, we are constantly all the time trying to come alongside everybody who serves to surprise them, to delight them, to thank them, to give them the community, to put people beside them.

By the way, this is why we build teams. We build teams so that nobody serves alone. Every, we think in terms of being on ministry teams, but let me tell you, I do think that

one of the reasons that people have bad experiences serving is because not enough people are serving.

So then it's just like, they keep putting their hand up. Okay. I'll be here.

It's like, really, we should have enough people that you only need to serve like once or twice a month. But because everybody thinks there's an asterisk next to their name and they're special, then I, then the people who have the servant heart can end up showing up week in and week out. And so here's what I want you to know.

So in our church, about, from what we can tell, okay, we are spirit led, but we are also data driven. In other words, we know what's going on. About 70% of the adults in our church serve, which would be way above, way, so far above average.

It wouldn't even be fun, but that still means, and again, I'm not like I wrestled with this preaching. I'm like, I'm not here to beat you up, but I'm just letting you know, there are 30% of people who do not serve in this church at all, but most of them do not mind being served by this church constantly. And that's got to change.

Every person needs to find their part of the wall. Okay. Which, and I guess what I'm trying to say there too is, everybody serving will have a way better experience if everybody is serving.

Finally, last thing, the place that you serve is opposite your house. Let me show you this. Here's what I mean.

Let's go to one other verse. So if you go with me to verse, I believe it's verse, 10. If I can find this in verse 10, it says this next to them, Jedaiah, the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house.

And then it goes on and on. So there's a couple of different guys that were told the place they served was opposite their house, which when I thought about that, you know, I thought about that is what is, what is it saying? It's he's saying, start where you are with what you have. It made me think particularly of our, of our campuses.

You know, as we have launched Lexington and as we've launched Davie, one of the things that we've done is we've said, okay, wait, the church is most effective when

the church is most local and campuses are not about our church getting bigger as much as our church is getting closer to the people in our church who love our church as well as, where lost people live. But I also thought, you know, the easiest thing to do for some people is to look at, if you know, if you think about all the church is doing as like a big wall, the whole wall that is in the book of Nehemiah, it's very easy for people to be critical of other sections of the wall that maybe they're not responsible and they're not doing anything about instead of focusing on what God has put in front of them. In fact, here's the thing.

Do you know the difference between a critic and a servant? This is so helpful to know, I think. Well, they have something in common. A critic and a servant both see a problem.

That's what they have in common. It's kind of like, okay, critic and servant both see a problem.

The critic complains about it, right? Critiques it, tells everybody about it, puts a blog post out about it, makes a Yelp thing about it, whatever it is.

And the servant says, maybe I could do something about this. So in the growing pains of our church, if there is different things, different pains and problems and pressures that you're beginning to see, it might be God calling you maybe only for a season to step in and serve. I mean, I, when I think about this church, I think about, I just wanted to, in part, what I wanted to do is end by thanking everybody who serves at all different levels and capacities in our church.

Because I, when I think about the last 10 years, none of this would be possible without the servant-hearted nature of our people. When I think about, let me just, I just want to name a couple groups, because by the way, that's what he does. He says the perfumers and the goldsmiths and the priests, and he kind of puts these groups together.

By the way, some people think the reason Nehemiah's, you know, this is his personal journal at some level is he's writing down this list so that he could later honor and thank them. Okay. This is who's serving this.

They were next to them and they were next to them. And so, you know, I, our churches got so many different ministries. I can't do them all, but I just wanted to thank us a specific couple of groups.

Number one, I want to thank our staff. I know they're paid by the church, but I'm just telling you, they serve tirelessly. They love you guys.

And they're all the things that you, every, think about it this way. Everything that you see is because of everything that you don't see. And there's just a group of staff working tirelessly all the time so that we can better make and mobilize disciples in environment of prayer and worship.

I just want to let you know, our elders are incredible and I want to thank them. Our elders, you, I mean, there's a lot, this has been probably in our church for various reasons, one of the more difficult years we've had in the last decade, just different things that different families are going through in our church. And our elders have been there to bring the help and the hope and the healing of Christ.

They've been there to walk with people through suffering and through sin. I want to uniquely thank the community group leaders. You know, it's interesting.

We have some people, and I love you, we have some people in this church and we can't even get them to go to a community group. And we, you know, I've tried to say, if you're not in a group, you're not really in our church. And if you're not in a group, you can't get all you could out of this sermon series.

And we still, people don't go to group. And yet we've got, we have a lot of people in groups. So

I'm saying, yeah, there's a whole another type of person who's as busy as all the people who think they can't get in group.

And those people are leading and they're opening up their houses oftentimes. I want to thank the women's leads, the community group leaders, and just the way that they, the way that I've seen them walk through sin and suffering in my own group. And then in general, I just want to thank all the different teams, whether it's the kids teams

or the student team, the mercy team, the production team, there's more than I can say.

I just want to say, thank you. We have a, we do have a servant hearted culture. And all we're asking as we head into this initiative and head into our future together is like, what would it look like if every person were to say, okay, I'm going to find my place in the wall next to him or next to her.

By the way, I just want to encourage you, if you are serving and that's many of you, that's maybe most of you, here's what I just want to encourage you. Look, as much as I'd like to think that my sermon is going to change everything, it's not. Here's what's going to change some things.

I just want to invite you guys to start shoulder tapping some people. To just go, you know what? Like we need some help. We need some help in students.

There's lots of students coming. We're preparing for the future. We need some help.

Or you just be honest with us. Hey, listen, it's been hard in kids and we're overwhelmed, but I see a lot of opportunity and I need you to get over here. Or we got people coming and we got people coming with all kinds of needs and it's more people than we know what to do with and we need to increase the mercy team.

Or particularly I think about our campuses. It's like, man, I want to just thank the people particularly on our campuses because you go to a campus, it's like you're back in church planting stage. And I was talking to our Pastor Ryan, I was talking to Pastor Ryan this week and I can't remember all the details, but he said something like, yeah, now that we're eight or nine weeks in, I think we're going to be able to go to serving every other week again.

Begin to go to serving every other week at the Davie campus. And I thought, yep, when you launch something, it's like the leaders go first, the launch team goes first and everybody's serving every Sunday. So I want to particularly say, thank you.

Where do we get the motivation, guys? Listen, here's the thing. You know this. Forgiving people, forgive people, right? And served people, serve people.

See, I just spent a long time talking about the nobles, right? The nobles and they wouldn't stoop. Well, you know what's interesting? Jesus Christ, the true noble, the Lord of Lords, King of Kings

is the great model of servanthood because though he was the true noble, he stooped. And he stooped to serve.

In fact, when he shows up 2,000 years ago, in a very surprising way, he defines his entire ministry like this, the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, which it just reminds us of this, at least this. When you serve, there's always sacrifice. Obviously, for Jesus, he humbled himself taking on the form of a servant, taking on flesh, living a sinless life and then dying in our place as our substitute.

But here's what it means. We want to make serving, I really mean this, we're trying to make it as easy as possible in the sense of here, we're going to onboard you and only twice a month, but I just want to encourage you, there's no way to serve without there not being some type of sacrifice. We're American, we're American, so we're trying to figure out is there a way for us to do it? There's got to be a way for us to do this and it not hurt.

There's got to be a way for us to do this and it not affect our money or our budget or our schedule. There's got to be a way to do this and I get to have every night free. It's like, doesn't work.

There's got to be a way to do this and I can still just pop in and out of church. Nope, it doesn't work that way. Here's what I want to encourage you with.

I want to encourage you, what you're going to get to, only the people who serve get to see the great miracles God's going to do. Why do I say that? Because think with me about John chapter two. That's the famous, you know, Jesus turns water into wine and it says, if you go read John chapter two, it says that nobody knew what happened except the servants.

It was only the servants who actually, okay, we're going to go get the water, we're going to do all the grunt work, we're going to pick, it's heavy, we're taking it. They're

the only ones that got to see the miracle and so I'm just telling you, when you decide to serve, you get to see what Jesus is doing in a new way. You get a front row seat, yes, to the hardest things in people's lives, but also to the best.

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to pray for us and then look, I just want to call us forward to different reasons. Some of you may want to come forward in just a minute and just be, you just want to get down here and remind yourself, Jesus Christ has served me in the gospel. Maybe for the first time you want to give your life to Jesus Christ and I want you to hear, this ain't about you trying to serve our church.

We're not trying to get you to serve our church. We're trying to get you to realize Jesus served you first. For others of you just may want to come down and just recommit.

I got to go first. I got to go first for my family. He said, some of your community, I got to go first for

my community group.

I got to go first. So many people, they're so worried about who's going to serve their kids and they need to be more worried about, man, I got to get my kids serving. I got to get my kids seeing a life of service as a life of meaningful contribution.

And then finally, I just want to encourage you just to, maybe some of you need to calm down and you just need to say, Lord, what section of the wall have you put in front of me? And then often the most time wasted is the time getting started. Let's get started together today. Let's pray.

Lord, across our campuses, I just want to say, thank you. Thank you that at the heart of the gospel is Jesus Christ serving us. We will never be able to out serve you, Lord.

We're not trying to. And the main thing we want to do is we want to serve you by serving people in your image. Lord, when we do this, when the church serves, when every person finds their place, everybody wins.

The individual is strengthened. The church is multiplied and lost people are reached in the city and communities are served. Lord, would you do it.

Would you do it for your glory and our good in Jesus name. Amen. Please stand and come forward.