

Ready for a Rebuild – It's time to mend the heart! Psalm 147

Watching the Commonwealth Games this week there has been some Great moments: The NZ woman's hockey team the Black Sticks broke their losing the game in a fulltime penalty shootout bogey with England in the semi's, who they lost to in the same situation 4 years ago. A bogey for the team dating back six years to the semi's against the Netherlands at London 2012 Olympics. Not this time. NZ men's hockey black sticks getting through to the final. Valerie Adams and Eliza McCartney's silver medals.

Then there was the heart-breaking moments: It was a terrible blow for the Silver Ferns netballers who suffering a shock loss to Malawi, then went down to England and to finish it off, Australia in the semi's. From a team's heartbroken wounds to an individual - NZ discus thrower Siositina Hakeai missed out on a bronze medal in the final round at the athletics field Thursday night. She was sitting in third place but ended up finishing fourth... for the second straight Commonwealth Games after an Indian competitor bettered her throw on their sixth and final effort. About this Hakeai said, "I was really happy with the distance considering there was no wind but I know I'm much better than what did today. It's just heart-breaking." "Finishing fourth on my last round ...it's heart-breaking. But there's nothing I can do. I can only come back stronger."

What a great attitude she has. Talk about mending and rebuilding broken hearts for individuals, teams and supporters, which may take 2-4 years to repair broken dreams, unless you retire or give up in the meantime. Just like the commonwealth games athletes, no one in the world is immune to being wounded or brokenhearted. A situation that requires a rebuilding of vision, passion and purpose to reach a goal in life or fulfil a dream, even the mending or healing of a wounded heart.

It could be for you a broken relationship, a loss of employment, reduction in income or failed business venture, a loss of health and mobility, a failure of studies, even a moral failure.

I have been speaking of individuals and teams but what about when it involves a nation who are the Blessed People of God under Gods own caring love who been kicked out of their 'Promised Land', which has been left unattended to be overgrown and ruled by wild animals after it was destroyed, including the city and its Temple where God's holy presence dwelt. God's own

people the Jews now separated from their land to live in exile having broken their covenant with God through their constant rebellion, disobedience and law breaking.

Let us read **Psalms 147** now and hear what happens when it is time for God to rebuild the nation literally while healing the relational wounds with the people mending broken hearts.

This psalm, one of the collection of the final five psalms, was most likely written after the Jewish exiles returned to Israel the Promised Land from the 70-year captivity in Babylon. It is thought that these Psalms were written specifically for celebration at the dedication of the restored walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. Verse 2 praises the Lord for building up Jerusalem and gathering the outcasts of Israel. Verse 13 thanks the Lord for strengthening the bars of Jerusalem's gates, which would fit with the rebuilt walls.

We read in Nehemiah 2:27, *“Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites from all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and with songs to the accompaniment of cymbals, harps and lyres.”* Psalm 147:7 corresponds with *“Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp.”*

If these psalms were written for the celebration after the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, we need to keep in mind that this was not a quick process. Under Nehemiah's brilliant leadership, the walls and gates were rebuilt in an amazing 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). But the process of restoring the Jews to the land had begun in 538 B.C. under Zerubbabel. Due to opposition, the few that returned were unable to complete the rebuilding of the temple until 516 B.C. Then, in 458 B.C., Ezra led a second return to the land, followed by Nehemiah in 445. Which means that the restoration of the Jews to the land and the completion of the protective walls and gates around Jerusalem took over 90 years, after the 70 year captivity.

I point this out because so often, we're in such a hurry that if God doesn't do things according to our timetable, we get frustrated and discouraged. Living in what is an instant world doesn't help anyone to learn patience. It only took us a few minutes to read through this psalm that describes how God rebuilds Jerusalem, gathers the exiles, heals the brokenhearted, judges the wicked, and blesses the nation with peace. But in reading it over so

quickly, we often forget that the psalm describes what is the culmination of years and even generations of prayers and work. So as we pray and labour for revival and spiritual reformation starting right here in our community, for our country, for the completion of the Great Commission, which is the reaching of every single people group in the world with the good news of the gospel, we need to keep this perspective. God is not always in the hurry that we are in! His timing is not always in line with our timing. For instance, who has read the front of this month's bulletin where it says: *Joseph waited 15 Years. Abraham waited 25 Years. Moses waited 40 Years. Jesus waited 30 years.*
So if God is making you wait, you're in very good company.

So I ask you this morning -Are you ready and waiting for a rebuild – a mending, or healing of heart perhaps?

Let's begin by asking what is your Jerusalem?

What dreams, plans and purposes have been lost, broken down, destroyed even? A situation requiring God's rebuilding/mending. And also **What is the issue causing you great sorrow or the wound that is the source of you brokenheartedness** that requires the LORD's healing of heart, mind or spirit and even the rebuilding if not of your complete life, then a part of it?

Today the LORD desires to mend your heart, rebuild your [life] Jerusalem. God is here. The Divine physician, Jehovah Rapha- the God who heals you. It was Jesus who revealed himself to the world when he went to the Synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth on the Sabbath and read from the scroll of the OT prophet Isaiah, *'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Luke 4:18-19

The LORD and King of the Jews who builds up Jerusalem, gathers his people as exiles, healing the brokenhearted and binding up their wounds. Allusions to which we have just sung about in the hymn, 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear; It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds and drives away his fear. Inspiration for John Newton for this hymn came from these scriptures along with the testimony of his own sinful broken life.

The Lord rebuilds by binding or mending the lives of the broken-hearted! Literally and Figuratively - Bringing hope to his people!

Right in the middle of talking about God healing the brokenhearted and binding up their wounds, the psalmist interrupts himself with this. He counts or determines the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord and abundant in strength or mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.” It is the abruptness that should catch our attention. The connection seems to be, if it seems impossible for God to gather and restore the exiles of Israel from the captivity, then look at God’s great power in governing the stars. If the LORD can count them and name them all, which points to His authority over them, then certainly God can care for His oppressed people. In verse 4, the Lord counts the stars, but in verse 5, literally, you cannot count His understanding. It is beyond measure. *V5 Great is our LORD and mighty in power. His understanding has no limit.*

We need to know that it is God’s power and understanding of our situation, that the Psalmist describes here as God’s love beyond measure. As in without limit, unending love, amazing grace, the sentiment contained in the new version of John Newton’s classic that we sang at the beginning of the service. This is the all-powerful, all-knowing God whose business it is to Mend broken hearts – rebuild broken lives... from relationships to failed business ventures, family tragedy, even national exile.

So how does God demonstrate his great power? The Bible reveals that it is by God lifting up the downtrodden. V6 The LORD sustains the humble, downtrodden, lowly and afflicted, But casts the wicked to the ground... God is in a personal relationship of love with all his creatures below, with the victims of greed, pride, selfishness, the list of sin goes on, to which God stands opposed too and from all such people who cause another’s woes.

The reality about God, that his power and understanding are his love beyond measure, hits home when we understand that the ones God chooses to pour out His grace on are the exiles, the outcasts, brokenhearted, wounded, afflicted, poor, captive, blind, oppressed, weak, and despised.

Again. What is your Jerusalem? What has been devastated or destroyed and requires a rebuild in your life?

When we mix the physical nature of the rebuild with the inner working of the rebuild, the mending of wounds and the healing of hearts, it may be quite a process, especially where relationships have been severely strained or damaged by abuse of different kinds that will take time, along with prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation with God and between people, for the rebuild to happen and healing of hearts to eventuate.

It is not always an instant or even a 52 day rebuild as Nehemiah did with the walls of Jerusalem. Sometimes it is just one building block at a time. A prayer and then an initial meeting with someone else, sometimes with a support person to get things started. Such a rebuild requires a patient and persevering approach.

For those who have been to see the movie *I can only imagine* which portrays the true story of Bart Millard's life. His Jerusalem which was the break down in his relationship with his father who was an abusive drunk who's wife left when Bart was 10. It took time for Bart to be able to forgive his Father but occurred over a number of years, meetings, and even included rebuilding a Land Rover together, while Bart's Dad dealt with terminal cancer and the seeking of his son's forgiveness, as a born again believer, for what he'd done. That took time and required patience on the part of the father because Bart had been really hurt inwardly and grossly affected. Bart's Dad simply had to, in humility before God and Bart, wait and pray.

The good news was Bart's Dad gave up his sinful pride and wicked life to turn to the one who could mend and rebuild his own broken life and heart, healing his psychological, and spiritual wounds to make him whole again. Turning from making his son's life hell to wanting his own son's heart to be healed from the hurt he had caused, and forgive him before he died.

Which is a lesson to us all - along with God's word to us today...

¹*Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!*

²*The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel.*

³*He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.*

⁴*He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.*

⁵*Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.*

⁶*The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.*

⁷*Sing to the Lord with grateful praise.... We will now stand and sing as our response to God's word praising Him with 'My hope is built on nothing less'.*