



Dirty Jobs

Nehemiah 3:1-32

Dirty jobs nobody wants

Dirty Jobs is a TV series on the Discovery Channel that aired from 2003 to 2012 in which host Mike Rowe is shown performing difficult, strange, disgusting, or messy occupational duties. These jobs are jobs that many would not want to do or may even feel are beneath them to do. As Wikipedia notes, "Rowe could be processing smelly seafood in a fish factory, collecting bat guano for prized fertilizer or cleaning septic tanks to maintain a fresh-smelling environment. His apprenticeship never ends as he learns from those who keep our world running smoothly."

Are there jobs that you think are beneath you? Are there jobs that you feel you have worked too hard to get where you are that you don't feel like you should ever have to do? Or, on the other hand, do you feel like you haven't been given the talents or brains or skills that others have so you don't feel you need to step into certain areas of need?

Well this **third chapter of Nehemiah**, which many would just skip over because it appears to just be a list of hard to pronounce names, will give us reason to rethink how God might want to use us no matter the job.

Notice that God placed these long lists in the Bible for a reason, or reasons, of course. One reason might be that it shows that God sees and cares about the work as well as the workers. And these names listed for others to read would have been an encouragement to not only the workers themselves, but the generations to follow.

Last week we looked at Nehemiah chapter 2 when Nehemiah finally revealed his plan to the people and called on them to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Leaders motivate by example—an example of service

The initiative is taken by Eliashib the high priest, who, along with his fellow priests, rebuilt quite a bit of the wall, a gate and a tower.

¹Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.

What a great example to the people to see the priests step up, take a trowel, some mortar, and some bricks and begin the back-breaking task of rebuilding the walls.

And then the list follows around the walls in a counter-clockwise fashion naming the people, sometimes with a little description, and then what part of the wall they worked on.

Do you think you are too good?

In **v. 5** we meet a group of workers from Tekoa.

⁵Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

Tekoa was a small town about 16km north from Jerusalem. The "nobles" of Tekoa were the wealthy land-owners of that town. And it says that they refused to participate in this work of God.

These folks were rich. These folks were employers. When there was work being done in Tekoa, they were the supervisors and others did the work.

They may have felt just fine with their decision to not help. The wall got done without them so who cares? Apparently, God cared. He wanted it to be recorded for all of history that these folks missed out on the blessing of being a part of a great work of God because they felt it was beneath them.

Do you think you are not good enough?

Look who else is actually working here: Goldsmiths! Perfumers!

⁸Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

This was not their job...not their specialty. They didn't know anything about building walls. But they did what needed to be done. God didn't need a thousand masons and carpenters to

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rebuild the wall — He used ordinary people who were willing to work.

These people are the opposite from those who say, "I'm too good to do this kind of work."

These are the people who say, "I'm not good enough to do this kind of work." "I can't do that." "I don't have the right education." "I don't have the right talents." "I don't have enough money."

God is looking to use people who are willing to step up like the prophet Isaiah and say, "Here am I. Send me." He is looking for those who are willing to humbly serve Him and others. These are those who get to participate in the joys of doing God's work that has lasting impact.

**God is looking for people who say,
"Here am I. Send me."**

Even in a male focused culture with a typical male task of construction, some females said, "Here am I. Use me."

¹²And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

Shallum's daughters were willing to work when the nobles of Tekoa were not. And their work was recorded for all of history in God's Word. Just think when these women showed their sons and daughters that they were a part of this great work, how proud their children would have been!

Are you willing to take on the dirty jobs?

As in the show Dirty Jobs, even hard jobs can have an even more challenging aspect to them. Notice that Malchijah took on the unenviable task of repairing the Refuse Gate.

¹⁴Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

Malchijah is my new favorite name. Not only does it sound cool, but here is a guy who takes on working on the worst part of the wall. Someone has to repair the Refuse Gate and Malchijah says, "I'll take it."

God is looking for those who are willing to humbly serve Him and others.

The gate received its name from the refuse and ash that was removed from the Temple (along with all of the dung that was collected in and around the city) that was taken out of the city

Are you the kind that is not only willing to serve, but also willing to take on the tasks that others would balk at? How deep does your servant's heart go? Can you say, along with Jesus, "I did not come to be served, but to serve"?

into the Valley of Hinnom where it was burned. It was the gate that led to the continually burning trash heap. The smell must have been horrendous.

Oh, sure, everyone wants to repair the Tower of the Ovens (v. 11) — that's where they baked the bread in Jerusalem! Or else they want to repair the Fountain Gate (v. 15)—nice and cool. But who's going to fix the Dung Gate?!! Enter Malchijah.

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Do everything as to the Lord

Verse 20 introduces us to another man that stood out because of his enthusiastic hard work.

²⁰After him Baruch the son of Zabbai carefully repaired the other section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

The word "carefully" is the word, *charah*, which means *to glow, warm, blaze up, zeal, earnestly*. In a group of hard workers, Baruch stood out as a zealous worker.

If we take **Col. 3:23** to heart ("And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.") we should all be recognized for our zealous work for God.

Remember the men of Tekoa? Their nobles wouldn't work under their supervisors? These men of Tekoa — common, ordinary men — finished the section of the wall they were working on, then they went to work on another section. v. 27

They didn't say, "Whew, we're done. We'll just stit back now and wait until everyone else is done." They pitched in to help others. What an example the men of Tekoa are for us.

And what an example this "boring list of names" is to us when it comes to stepping up to do the dirty jobs in order to serve God and others!

APPLICATION

1. Can you think of any job that you deem unworthy of your efforts? Why?
2. Are you willing to imitate Jesus and to serve others regardless of the job God asks you to do?

