



# “From Head & Heart to Hands & Feet”

**Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 21, 2021**

*“We are using this season of Lent to envision God’s mission for Highland on the other side of the Coronavirus Exile”*

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## Nehemiah 5:1-19

### **The Problem**

The wealthy Jews were exploiting the vulnerability of the poor Jews

### **The Context**

The land was in famine: v. 3

The Persian King’s tax was burdensome for the poor: v. 4

The poor mortgaged their fields and their children for food and tax money

The Jewish elite had even sold some fellow Jews to outsiders: v. 8

Add to this the burden of working on the wall to the neglect of fields

The wall project was threatening to implode

### **The Transgression: see Leviticus 25:35-43**

The Jews were not to charge interest to fellow Jews: v. 36-37

The Jews were not to enslave fellow Jews: v. 39-41

The Year of Jubilee: giving back fields, releasing service: v. 28, 40

The point: the strong shall bear up the weak: see Romans 15:1-3

“Blessed to be blessing”: this is how we participate in the story of God

The example of Nehemiah: v. 14-19

Using our blessing to exploit the less fortunate is kingdom antithesis.

### **The Connection to Our Vision Process Framework**

This incident sandwiched between the external persecutions of chaps 4 & 6

Vivid illustration of hypocrisy, a collision between vision and values

Building an external wall to protect and unify the Jewish community

Jewish leaders were maintaining a wall dividing and exposing the poor Jews

Unsustainability of enacting a plan incongruent or in conflict with values

## **On Values**

Values are long-held and deeply cherished beliefs

They can be held by individuals and by organizations

Organizational values can be different than the sum total of all the individuals' values in the organization

Organizational values pass down through history

Organizational values cannot just be "picked". They must be cultivated over time

As such there are three kinds of values in any organization:

- Lip-service values which are leader-imposed words only
- Forming values
- Deeply-Held values

Knowing our church's deeply-held values and forming values is important

Because a value is a form of latent pent up energy

A mission plan that gives expression to values releases that energy

A mission plan that goes against values will meet resistance

A mission plan that is irrelevant to values will be ignored

## **Four Suggested Highland Covenant Values**

"The importance of intergenerational community, in which all ages are included and valued, and in particular, children. This value expresses itself in a quality of shared life and a strong commitment toward both general and Christian education."

"The importance of loving one another, spending time together, persevering in relationship even through disagreements and differences, and having fun."

"The importance of loving our neighbors through humble service in our surrounding community and by sincerely and winsomely welcoming any and all into our circle of activity."

"The importance of God's Word, learning it correctly and living it out faithfully."