**SERMON PREACHED BY THE RT. REV. HOWARD GREGORY**

**BISHOP OF JAMAICA & THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**

**AT ST. GEORGE’S CHURCH, KINGSTON**

**TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF**

**ARCHBISHOP ENOS NUTTALL**

**ON SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2016**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose word is authority and power and whose way is love, grant unto us today clear minds, understanding hearts, and willing spirits so that we may wisely appropriate your word of truth. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Nehemiah 2:17-18

Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us re-build the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace”. I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us start building!”

We have come together on this day as members of the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and as citizens of this nation to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Archbishop Enos Nuttall. And the question may be asked, why should we bother to have such a celebration regarding someone who has been so long dead when we have so much of contemporary issues and concerns to which to direct our attention? Apart from being the longest serving diocesan bishop, having served in that position for 36 years, from 1880 to his death in 1916, his death is being commemorated firstly because of his outstanding contribution to the development of the Anglican Church in Jamaica and in the wider Province, and secondly, because of the leadership role he played in the economic, social and educational development of this country.

Particularly outstanding was the role he played in the rebuilding of Kingston and other parts of the island after the 1907 earthquake, as he was the moving spirit behind the reconstruction work at a time of inertia of the government of the day. In this regard, we congratulate the National Library of Jamaica for bringing to our attention as a nation and church once more, the contribution of this religious leader to the life of this nation.

In a world of increasing secularism in which there are those who advocate that religion is for the realm of the subjective and the personal and has no place in the public affairs of the life of the nation, and also a world in which there are those who advocate that those who have a right to speak and act on national issues, are those who are politically elected representatives or leaders of the business sector, this celebration not only reminds us of the fallacy of such positions in light of the reality of our history, but also that when the crunch comes, those who have the most talk or power are not necessarily the ones offering the deliverables.

In the text chosen for this afternoon’s reflection, and in the context within which it occurs, we encounter a man named Nehemiah. He is a man of privilege in the king’s court. Here is a man whose circumstance is not that of the harsh conditions under which the people of his homeland find themselves, but one who has made it well for himself, perhaps like some of those whom we refer to these days as the people of the Diaspora, enjoying the life of the king’s court, but who continues to feel every ounce of his people’s pain, suffering and shame.

Nehemiah was an exile in Susa, part of the Persian Empire, and who would frequently inquire about the welfare of his people back in the homeland. Having received a discouraging report about the physical condition of the city Jerusalem, he was deeply moved by the reports, and lamented over the situation, to the extent of confessing his own sin and that of the people, assuming such a cause and effect relationship. So burdened was he by the news that it eventually affected his very disposition. The king observed his condition, and after a process of questioning and disclosure, albeit in a context of divine guidance, as the text suggests, allowed him to go and attend to the condition of his homeland.

Here then was a man whose vision and perspective on life was not just limited to his circumstance, but who nurtured a strong sense of compassion for his people, informed by his faith in God.

Another thing to note about Nehemiah was his sense of realism. He keeps his ears to the ground and he gets the latest word about the situation, and, when he actually gets back to his homeland, he makes a personal check to ascertain the veracity of what he has been told. In the language of today, we may say that he did a SWAT analysis and came up with a SMART strategy for alleviating the condition of his people back home.

Though separated by centuries and indeed, more than two thousand years, it is into this picture that I want to introduce Enos Nuttall, the man, the bishop, archbishop, humanitarian and nation builder. Enos Nuttall came to Jamaica in 1862 as an Anglican to work with the Wesleyan Methodist Mission as an un-ordained missionary. In February 1866 he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Courtenay and priest on the 8th April of the same year. He was appointed Island Curate at this Church, an office which he held (nominally after his election as Bishop) until he died*.* At the youthful age of thirty eight he became in 1880 the 5th bishop of Jamaica. He was consecrated in St Paul’s Cathedral, London on St Simon and St Jude’s Day, October 28th in the same year. He became the first Archbishop of the West Indies in 1897, the position having designated originally as Primate, and to which he had been elected in 1893.

His dedication and compassion for the people of this land and for nation-building was to find expression in the many activities and spheres of life in which he was engaged as a visionary, and in his work along with others to establish institutions which in many ways were part of the foundation of what we know today as Independent Jamaica.

Among his many initiatives were the following:

* He established the Deaconess Order to Jamaica in 1890, whose members established the first training programme for nurses, and who were also active in the establishment of schools in several parishes including St Hilda’s and St Hugh’s.
* He established a nursing home at 116 East Street, the first private institution of its kind in Kingston, and which later metamorphosized to become the Nuttall Memorial Hospital.
* He established the Cathedral Chapter at the Cathedral of St Jago de la Vega in 1899 with the Diocesan Bishop as the Dean and the rector of the Cathedral as the Senior Canon
* He oversaw the rebuilding of over 130 church owned buildings – including Bishops Lodge - damaged or destroyed in the 1907 Earthquake. This destruction was not confined to Kingston but extended as far as Highgate (St Cyprian’s) and Linstead (Holy Trinity). This activity involved extensive fundraising both at home and overseas.

At the national level he was also involved in a number of activities.

* He served as the chairman of the Jamaica Schools Commission which was responsible for, among other things, exercising oversight of Trust Schools at that time, and was *“instrumental in starting off a new Board for the Titchfield School in Port Antonio, in the amalgamation of the Kingston Grammar School with Wolmer’s Boys School and in drawing up rules for the election of Rhodes Scholars...”* Additionally, with the Negro Education Grant coming to an end in 1846, many primary schools closed and primary education was restricted. It was under Nuttall’s leadership of the Commission that Primary Education became available to the general population.
* He served as chairman of the Board of Mico Training College (now Mico University College for thirty four (34) years
* He was involved in the founding of Shortwood Teachers’ College and served on the Board as the Founding Chairman for many years.
* He stablished the Belmont Orphanage at Stony Hill in 1892 on property he owned.
* He assisted in the formation of the Jamaica Agricultural Society in 1895
* He was instrumental in the formation of the Jamaica Farm School which later became the School of Agriculture (now CASE).

Now this may not seem to be extra-ordinary but, it must be borne in mind that all this was happening just decades after the Abolition of slavery and the subsequent Morant Bay Uprising, when Britain had to establish a system of Crown Colony Government, given the failure of the Local Assembly of the day to devote attention and resources to the welfare of the population in general. The system of governance served the interest of the plantocracy, and there was as yet no universal adult suffrage or political parties led by people like ourselves, and who we could always harass and criticize for not doing enough, and using the ballot box to vote out.

So, here then, like Nehemiah was a man whose situation was not of the dire circumstances of his people, but who was driven by a sense of identification and compassion toward those less privileged than himself, informed by his faith in God, and his understanding of the nature of the call to episcopal leadership of the people of the church and of this nation.

Returning to the text, we see the Jewish community emerging from exile under Persian control, and facing their city and temple in ruin. There are apparently some who had means and were able to exercise some power, as we shall see, but that was not being directed toward enhancing the common good. It is, therefore, a situation in which there is devastation all around, and the majority of citizens are looking on in despondency and despair.

Arriving in Jerusalem, with all its dereliction evident, Nehemiah made no announcement of his presence but went and inspected the walls and the gates of the city and the Temple by himself. Having done so, he then summoned the officials of the Jewish community and told them about the nature of his mission, the derelict condition of the walls of the city and the Temple, and its negative effect on the people and their relationship with God.

The text suggests that the people immediately accepted the proposal from Nehemiah to begin the process of re-building. It should not surprise us to see people readily responding to visionary leadership, zeal, and transparency, when they are included in the process of decision-making.

But having laid out a vision for reconstruction, the picture is not, however, one of total acceptance. Opposition immediately surfaced. Some who had a lot of influence on public opinion began to ridicule the project. It should be instructive for those who exercise leadership and governance in our own time that, however well-intentioned, and however much projects are undertaken for the national wellbeing, there will be opposing voices who have no viable alternative to offer, except that they must oppose anything that looks like change.

Listen to the detractors of Nehemiah:

What are these feeble Jews doing? That stone wall they are building – any fox going up on it would break it down.

As the work progressed, so did the opposition. Various missions of disruption from without were planned. The power of disruption from within was even more threatening to the fulfillment of the mission.

As I read this passage once more I wondered for a moment whether I was reading a contemporary document about Jamaica’s political culture in which sometimes sabotage our own national good. Be that as it may, the Jewish community of the day began to lose morale and strength, and began to feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the task. This must be a clear message to the church and to the nation concerning the way in which the very people who stand to benefit from a positive project and strategy can be the ones who seek to defeat or to abandon it. Do we not know that there are communities in which dons have ruled, and when attempts have been made to change the dynamics in those communities, the women come out to demonstrate, while the men make the guns bark? And then when murder comes close to home there are cries for the Police and the Minister of National Security to bring down the crime statistics.

In defiance of these naysayers, Nehemiah urged the people to stay and to fight, and came up with a creative plan to ensure that every citizen became involved and had a stake in the outcome and that the task was completed.

As if there were not sufficient problems for Nehemiah and the people a natural disaster struck in the form of a severe famine. The people had to resort to offering their sons and daughters as pledges for loans. They soon found themselves in serious problems as they were not able to redeem their sons and daughters and were getting into serious debt with their fellow Jewish money lenders. Nehemiah had to have some really strong words with the Jewish moneylenders to get them to release their fellow Jews from some of the debt. I rather suspect that Nehemiah was not too polite in the words he had for them. Knowing our national context, I wonder if this was a question of the interest rates being charged by the banks in those days being inflated. The reality is that in this case moral persuasion worked, what will work in our context is another matter.

Nehemiah, having challenged the people to make sacrifices for the common good by redeeming their debt, recognized that he too had to send a positive signal as to what he was prepared to do on his part. So Nehemiah took the decision to forgo his allowance as governor because of the heavy tax-burdens which the people were already being asked to bear. But that was not the limit to Nehemiah’s generosity and sacrifice. He fed some of the officials from his own resources and even dispatched his servants to be a part of the restoration project wherever they were needed. Here truly is a model of servant leadership at work.

The good news is that having stayed the course, the restoration of the walls was completed in a record time of 52 days. With persistent effort and cooperation with the religious leader and priest, Ezra, in creating the moral, social, and religious climate and context which facilitated the development of a cohesive, self-sustaining and viable community, this collaborative partnership came to fruition in the re-dedication of the walls of the city and the temple.

Thus, while his leadership was important, Nehemiah was making it clear that it takes the cooperation of persons and institutions representing religion and the institutions of governance, as well as a renewal of a sense of community, to bring about a rebuilding of corporate institutions and life.

In the end, even the opponents of Nehemiah and his project who were critical of the quality of the finish, had to concede that its completion in record time was a sure sign that the project was of God and the subject of his guidance.

In 1907, our walls crumbled as did our temples. According to reports from the period, it was approximately 3:30 pm on Monday January 14, 1907, when an earthquake of the magnitude of 6.5 shook Kingston, one of the world's deadliest **earthquakes** recorded in history. With that initial shock estimated to have lasted for up to 35 seconds, the business and residential districts of Kingston came tumbling down. But this was only the beginning, as major fires broke out leading to further destruction and fatalities. It is estimated that between 800 and 1000 persons died while thousands were left homeless as some 85percent of buildings were damaged. Damage was estimated at 25,000,000 pounds at the time.

Most of us have only learnt of tsunamis in the last decade or so. But, there was a tsunami which followed the earthquake on the North Coast, affecting much of the north coast of Jamaica at Hope Bay, Port Antonio, Orange Bay, Sheerness Bay, Saint Ann's Bay, Buff Bay, Port Maria and Annotto Bay; and there were also some reports of waves along the south coast.  The level of the sea at Annotto Bay was reported to have initially dropped by more than 3 metres, as the sea withdrew a distance of about 80 metres, before returning at a height of about 2 metres above normal, flooding the lower parts of the town.

But what happens to a people when tragedy strikes and family members are dead, homes destroyed, places of worship destroyed, places of livelihood destroyed, and they are governed by a system which serves primarily that of the small privileged class? Here is the textbook case for the potential for what is known as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. And what is that, and what may it look like? Here I turn to the definition offered by the famous Mayo Clinic:

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

Many people who go through traumatic events have difficulty adjusting and coping for a while, but they don't have PTSD — with time and good self-care, they usually get better.

While the designation is not used if the symptoms do not persist for some months, and there was no such classification at that time, the point is that the experience of that earthquake would have left a significant number of people immobilized and overwhelmed by anxiety, at least for a while, not the least being an already unresponsive system of governance.

Numbered among the affected was Archbishop Enos Nuttall who had his residence on Caledonia Avenue seriously damaged by the earthquake but, driven by his vision and sense of responsibility and pastoral leadership for his people, he set up his office in the Carriage House at the back of his residence. In fact there is a picture in Church House which shows much of the activity taking place in the open air with a young man at a typewriter identified as the late Bishop Percival Gibson, who it is said, was enthusiastic in assisting the Archbishop in his work.

One question which obviously arises and which has baffled the minds of human beings through the ages is, why do bad things happen? Why would Israel find itself in such a state in Nehemiah’s time, and why would something as devastating as this 1907 earth quake occur? This is a question for people of faith and even those of no faith or who oppose faith.

This is certainly not the occasion on which to attempt a discourse on this issue. Suffice it to say that for our purpose, and in light of the engagement of both Nehemiah and Archbishop Nuttall of their tragedy, I offer a response which seems to capture their perspective and their response. It comes from a contemporary Jewish rabbi, Rabbi Harold S Kushner:

For me, the earthquake is not an “act of God.” The act of God is the courage of people to rebuild their lives after the earthquake, and the rush of others to help them in whatever way they can.

So, here we are back in the city of Kingston in 1907, virtually demolished by the earthquake with extensive reach into rural Jamaica. The walls of the city and the temple, as it were, are damaged. The scene is one of dereliction, ineffective governance and a people traumatized by the experience. How do we move ahead and begin to pick up the pieces? Given his background of compassionate and motivational leadership, the Archbishop was asked to serve as the chairman of the National Restoration Committee established by the Governor after the 1907 Earthquake to rehabilitate Kingston. This was in spite of the fact that the Church, in view of its extensive holdings, probably suffered more than any other institution apart from the Government itself, and Nuttall had more than enough work to do in rebuilding/repairing them.

Archbishop Nuttall did not have to walk the walls of the city to see the destruction. He was living in the midst of it, as pictures of the outbuildings of his damaged residence which constituted his office bear witness. Notwithstanding the fact that Nuttall was the moving force behind the Committee, as he not only drew up a memorandum outlining the purposes of the Committee but, like Nehemiah, he realized that effective leadership is not a one-man activity, and so he sent out invitations to leading merchants and other prominent citizens inviting them to serve as members. For Nehemiah, the foreign monarch living in Susa was to serve as a valuable ally and source of material support.

In the case of Nuttall, while Jamaica still enjoyed colonial status, one of Nuttall’s major achievements was in persuading the British Government to give a grant of 150,000 pounds sterling as well as a loan of 800,000 to assist with the reconstruction work. Being aware of the resistance by the British Government to a loan, Nuttall along with the Crown Solicitor went personally to London to argue the case. By 1909 the Restoration Committee wound up its activities as the relief funds had been distributed and the loan funds allocated.

There are two features of Nuttall’s post-earthquake work, worthy of note, namely, the way in which the so-called religious and secular aspects of the life of the society were held together in his focus on the rebuilding of churches and public facilities, and the other being the way in which the rebuilding of educational institutions were important in his recovery strategy.

This is consistent with the strategy of Nehemiah who was not a priest or a bishop for that matter, but who engaged the priest Ezra in a partnership for the promotion of the common good, civil and religious. In this way Nehemiah was able to lead a reform in which he addressed social, moral and religious abuses among the people of Jerusalem. He recognized that people cannot be mobilized and empowered to change their circumstance and situation if there isn’t an accompanying transformation of mind and attitude.

Accordingly, Nuttall oversaw the rebuilding of over 130 church owned buildings, including Bishops Lodge, his residence which was damaged or destroyed in the 1907 Earthquake, while in the national sphere he and the Restoration Committee were restoring many public buildings. Similarly, his association with Mico Training College and Titchfield High School, for example, was part of his contribution to the rebuilding of educational institutions for the transformation of the nation in going forward and in laying the foundation for an independent Jamaica.

Nuttall’s efforts in education were geared toward broadened the base of opportunities opened to the population for an education, as he realized that this was a prerequisite for the development of the nation, and not just the rebuilding of damaged structures. This may not seem important but, remember that, as late as the 1970s when the late Hon. Edwin Allen was rolling out the New Secondary Schools, there were those who were asking, “who will be the helpers and the gardeners if everyone is going to have a Secondary Education?” Like Nehemiah’s restoration and recovery efforts, Nuttall’s were not just about physical structures but involved the simultaneous transformation of a people through the provision of education.

Both the biblical figure of Nehemiah and the historical figure of Enos Nuttall recognized that the re-building of a city was as much a work on structures as it is a work on people.

 So he recognized that people cannot be mobilized and empowered to change their circumstance and situation if there isn’t first of all visionary leadership and the awakening of a shared vision among people, thereby underscoring the fact that major undertakings in the life of a people, as for a congregation, require serious reflection, re-orientation, and transformation in the life of the community.

In the year 2012 I was invited to preach at the service at which there was the observance of the 140th anniversary of the city of Kingston, and which service was held in the Kingston Parish Church. I was reminded from my research then that this city of Kingston was founded as a consequence of a devastating earthquake. Here is an extract:

Kingston was founded at the end of the 17th century as a refuge for survivors of a devastating earthquake that had hit Jamaica, and that all but destroyed Port Royal, a large town on the opposite side of the harbor. Before the earthquake, the Kingston area housed little more than a few pig farmers and fishing shacks. Earthquake survivors set up homesteads, and very shortly plans were drawn up for a new town to be laid out beside the water and to be named in honour of the British king, William of Orange.

By the early 18th century, Kingston's natural harbour enabled the city to flourish as an important seaport. The traders who grew fat on the profits built fine town houses throughout the city, and freed slaves and immigrant workers flooded in, hoping to share in the city's boom. Some hundred years later, when Kingston finally received recognition as the island's capital, the rich had gravitated towards uptown Kingston and the northern outskirts, and the poorer population huddled in shantytowns on the edges of the old town.

It is therefore my observation that the foundation of this city was laid in the experience of a natural disaster and was soon characterized by the kind of social prejudices and distinctions which had typified plantation society of the day. I propose that there is a sense in which to understand the development of the city one has to keep these two elements in tension and alive.

Isn’t it interesting how some things never seem to change? It took an earthquake to establish it, and an earthquake to re-build and renew it. Look around the city of Kingston today, especially downtown Kingston and ask the question, in the logic of historical experience, what will it take to renew this city? Notice also the social distinctions which were obvious from the very beginnings. As from the laying of the foundations of this city when the poorer population huddled in shantytowns on the edges of the old town, is this still not the reality of today with the proliferation of tenement dwellings, whose occupants get burnt out frequently, evoking in those moments the great outpouring of platitudes from those in governance and private citizens alike. And while this is happening, those of means are buying up the properties for purposes of speculation, and new utterances are made about the re-development of Kingston. I cannot dismiss from my mind the fact that the Governor had to invite Archbishop Nuttall to head the Kingston Restoration Committee because of the inertia of those in the governance of the day.

Today, as a nation, we are focused on the re-building of a structure, not the physical one but, an economic one, and while all the energy is focused on this mission, there is moral and social degradation that is fast engulfing us. So the crime statistics are high and are being fuel by greed, the de-valuation of human life, a seeming inability to solve domestic conflict, corruption, indiscipline, unemployment and poverty, and the kind of moral degradation which led to the kind of display in recent weeks in which Primary School children had posters advertising lewd occasions of revelry at their school gate. He or she who has not seen the precipitous slide that is taking place in the nation, has his or her head buried in the sand or exists in a state of denial. Structural reform without moral and social reform will prove futile.

In the tide of secularism which is sweeping our world and nation, there are those who, either because of the lack of historical memory, or a desire to advance a religionless society, who not only deny the contribution of the church to this nation, but advocate the removal of the church and religion from every sphere of public life. And while religion must not be invoked only when there are moral considerations, the contribution of religion to the life of this nation in the past and in the present must not be distorted. True, it has never been perfect but, neither has any institution been able to claim that status.

At a point we must pause and ask ourselves, what is it that was the motivating force behind the life of this prelate which led him to accomplish so much in his lifetime? Perhaps he said it well in his Synod Sermon preached in 1912, just four years before his death:

Our greatest need of all in the Jamaica Church … is spiritual power. We have a provincial, diocesan, parochial and congregational organization fitted to deal with varied conditions and requirements… We have abundant machinery some of which will no doubt require to be adapted from time to time to changing circumstances: but we do not need more machinery.

What we need is power… It is not surprising that many Christians… have a vague idea of what is meant by spiritual power. It is thought of as something intangible, fanciful or unreal – that is and at the most, a mode of expression with little reality behind it… We have the agencies – the means of contact with the Divine, and yet we fail to feel the motive force, the power, the current of Divine Life stirring our own life. The Holy Spirit is more than an influence: He is a Person. His Presence is a Personal Presence: He is Christ’s Representative with us, as the ever available source of our spiritual strength and wisdom and influence and power. His contact with the human soul is close, personal, real.”

The Archbishop’s words are a reminder to those in governance and the leadership of this nation that structures and laws without the necessary will, motivation and empowerment to bring to effect that which is desired will be futile. His words also underscore the role of the Church, not just as another institutional structure in the nation, but one that is guided by the Divine Life, in its work and its witness within the nation.

The forward movement of this nation is not going to be the sole prerogative of governance, and especially so when so many citizens are withdrawing from participation in the electoral process.

As in the case with Nehemiah and Enos Nuttall who had to solicit the support of various stakeholders in their national rebuilding effort, the development of this nation will require the input of the major institutions and stakeholders, including the church, and the engagement of the citizenry in a broad process of consultation on the major issues confronting us, so that we can arrive at a consensus on the way forward toward national development, without borrowing or imposing those of other people, in spite of how well it may have worked for them.

Finally we must develop a culture of learning from our experiences of the past. Earlier I quoted the words of the Rabbi Kushner in view experiences of suffering and who said:

For me, the earthquake is not an “act of God.” The act of God is the courage of people to rebuild their lives after the earthquake, and the rush of others to help them in whatever way they can.

One positive thing which came out of this experience of tragedy was the changing of our building methods from brick to block and steel and with a greater sensitivity to building in an earthquake zone. Unfortunately, while we have not gone back to mortar and bricks, there is a significant amount of construction across the island, not just in the hotel sector as we have seen in recent weeks, which is paying no attention to building codes in our culture of indiscipline, and we shudder to think what will happen when the next major earthquake strikes.

Many of us, like insurance companies, are quick to attribute earthquake to “acts of God”. Yet, as Rabbi Kushner reminds us they are not acts of God to be identified with the disaster but, “acts of God” in relation to the courage of people to respond to the challenge of helping each other to rebuild their lives and move one. Not only did the detractors of Nehemiah criticize the walls and the temple when they restored but, they had to admit that the completion exercise in record time was of the act of God. Likewise today, we can affirm that the 1907 earth was not the act of God, but the act of God was evident in the leadership of Enos Nuttall, and the many persons and institutions who rallied to assist each other and to participate in a national effort of re-construction.

And we who would look for the act of God in today’s Jamaica, must look for it in the extent to which we are prepared as a people, under visionary and participatory leadership, to work toward a common vision for the re-building and development, not just of our economy, but the moral, social, religious and political life of the nation.

**AMEN**