

All In

Sermon Title: **All In**
Sermon Number: **6550**
Speaker: **Jason Thomas**

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Jason Thomas: Whatever it is that you've been given to steward, do it well.

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(Music Playing: 00:00:13 - 00:00:24)

Female: And now for "All In."

Jason Thomas: Amen, Amen and Amen again. Man, to say that it's been a journey would be an understatement as most of you probably know I'm an Atlanta boy through and through. For some reason married a girl from D.C. who made a good choice to come to Atlanta for college and we fell in love and got married and started our family and hit a few bumps in the road and God was faithful to restore and still push your head in the midst of that and it's been beautiful and I will never forget the first six years of marriage.

She didn't push hard, but I said, there's no way in the world I'd ever live in Washington D.C., too cold, way too cold, too violent, too much trauma there. My wife is a youngest of eight children. They are five remaining three of her brothers are deceased, two were murdered and one passed away at 37 years old of a heart attack. Her mom died when she was 16 months old of a heart attack at 42. So, I was like, "I don't think I can sign up for D.C." it's too much that comes along with that.

And about four and a half years ago, on a trip to just visit family. We -- in the city and for some reason I'm sitting on the Metro and I'm starting to fall in love with it. My God, this is not the plan, "stop, stop. I like Atlanta -- I like what we got going" and God stirred our heart in that moment to say that you all will be here at some point soon. Didn't know when, didn't know where, didn't know how.

January 2016, we went to Houston, Texas for a Ministry Conference, met a couple there that we had never heard of before. I got a chance to host and serve them, love their Spirit, love their heart, love their passion for Ministry and we're sitting in the Houston Airport and I look at my wife and I said, "I don't know where, when, or how but I believe that God called us to serve these people at some point in this journey." We've sat on that for a little while but six months after that. This couple moves to Atlanta,

Georgia to be trained to go out and start at Passion City Church in another part of the world. These people are from Houston, Texas. So, we assumed all signs pointed to Texas and isn't got to worry about God, I didn't put Texas on our heart.

About a year until that journey. They said Passion City Church is going to Washington D.C. and all of it started to come together and make sense. So, we sold our house, packed up our children, packed up our cars, packed up three storage boxes and went to Washington D.C. with nothing but a word from God on August 18 two years ago. In that time, God has done immeasurably more than we could ever ask, think or imagine. We went with completely open hands and I can tell you at 42 years old, I've never experienced this level of faith that we've walked in for the past two years. I'm getting to the word. I see you passing a thing. I'm getting there, I'm getting there, we are getting there but honest to God nothing, but the Lord in it, He allowed us to experience some things that were not on our radar at all.

We just people following after God's own heart. Been fortunate to speak and preach before a Supreme Court Justice didn't know, they look different without the robes on, I guess. I really pay attention to his face too, tough. Have had a chance to get to know the Vice President of the United States preach. See God working on his heart. We're in the midst of just some wild times in Washington D.C. A young mentee of mine and I were down at the White House today, three weeks ago when tear gas was fired off and rubber bullets were shot.

We left about an hour ago and I get home and my phone starts blowing up. People like "hey, you still at the White House?" and I'm like "what's going on?" and they said, "turn on your TV" and there have been a few times where I felt so grateful to come home and hug my wife and my children because I could have been very much caught up in the midst of that but I say all of that to say that God is building something in us all whether you've been riding with him for a long time or you're new to the journey. He's building something in us all and I just like to share for a few moments around this idea of all in. Let's say all in, say all in. For us when we started this journey. We're going to be in Nehemiah a little bit for the time that we have. So, if you want to go ahead and turn the Nehemiah Chapter 1, we're going to start there.

God knew that and what he was building in our hearts and in our lives, we couldn't be in half way, we couldn't in today and out tomorrow, we had to have an all in mentality. So, when we showed up and sold our house, God knew that we were all in. When we -- you know, start registering kids for school in another place. He knew that we were all in and it's -- I've kind of just been sitting in Nehemiah throughout this entire COVID season. It's a very familiar text for most of us, when I was coming through Word of Faith, our building campaign rise up and build straight out of Nehemiah and I love the heartbeat of Nehemiah and I want to suggest look at a few thoughts to consider tonight.

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So, I want to start a Nehemiah chapter 1 beginning with verse 1. It says the words of Nehemiah the son of Hakaliah. Now it happened in the month of Kislev in the twentieth year is I was in Susa the Citadel that Hanani one of my brothers came with certain men from Judah and I asked them concerning the Jewish who escaped who had survived the exile and concerning Jerusalem, and they said to me, "the remnant they are in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and it's gates are destroyed by fire and listen to Nehemiah's response. He said, as soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days and I continue fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And just that response from Nehemiah just shows that he's in all in and the first thing I want us to consider is really the posture of Nehemiah's heart, the posture of his heart.

Nehemiah was broken, he was humble. He was in a place where just this report about what had happened had crushed Nehemiah to his core. Now I don't know about you all, it says Nehemiah had to sit down and he wept and he mourned and he prayed and he fasted and I don't know about you all but I need those times where God has to just break me down to a point where -- it's like Jason sit down, pastor Nathaniel just sit down for a moment. I don't know about you all. I think it's been about the same in Atlanta, Georgia as it has in Washington D.C. but COVID season has caused us to sit down.

COVID season has given us a 14-15. I'm 16 weeks at home forced vacation with our families to be able to reconnect but it says

Nehemiah heard the report about this place and about his people and it's said, he was forced to just sit down and weep and mourn and fast and pray. That has to be the posture of our hearts. Our hearts have to be broken. Whenever God wants to get our attention. He has to break us down to that point where we have to sit down and mourn and be broken and cry and weep and feel every emotion.

Three months ago, we lay my father to rest. He battled early onset of dementia for about 7 years and we knew it was coming and my wife had a dream about it and the phone call came late one night and my stepmother said, "just called to tell you that your dad has gone." I were fortunate to spend Valentine's weekend here and we got to go see him in a nursing home and love him and I honor my father and I still honor my father in his life and his death. But that was something where God had to cause me to stop and slow down and sit down.

In the past seven years has been an amazing time for me to learn what it means to be a son. It helped me to become a better father, but it's one of those things that same posture of Nehemiah's heart to be able to sit down and be humble and weep and be broken and I just love that that's where Nehemiah is when the book starts out and I love that his heart broke for the place and for the people and I think that's something that all of us -- as we lead in our various spheres of influence of ministry, business and our communities. Wherever we are, we have to have a broken heart for both the place and the people and that's where Nehemiah start.

So, if we're going to be all in, we have to have that same posture of Nehemiah's heart. The second thing I want us to consider is the position of God's people. Now it starts off talking about the posture of Nehemiah's heart that it was broken and humble and mourning and weary, but then it says, you know "Nehemiah you're not called to do this by yourself" Nehemiah went and follow protocol and he went to the king to get letters and permission and all of these things and he scooped out the entire landscape but Nehemiah was not called to do it alone

I love that -- when we look at a little bit in Chapter 3, it's almost like a roll call. It starting to tell you everybody who was there. It's just like, you know be like "C. Elijah who was at the party?" you like, "man, you know, the (00:09:14) was there and so and so

there” and it just runs it down of every single person and I believe that God lives in the details. God cares so much about the details that he talked about in the gospels and some of the disciples went out to fish and he could have said, they caught a net full, they caught a whole lot but scripture tells us clearly. They caught a 157 fish. Why is that important? Because God is concerned with the details.

So, all these names in here, half of them that most of us can't even pronounce had a role to play. Every single person had a role to play and they took pride in it. Now, there were gates leading into the city that they were coming to fix back up Watergate, sheep gate, fountain gate, dung gate all of these gates and everybody took pride and each and every person I love it talks about Verse 29 of Chapter 3 is talking about the horse gate being repaired.

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Verse 28 says above the horse gate, the priest repaired each one opposite his own house. After them, Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. Now, we all have a role to play. I had a conversation with a mentee today who's an artist, who's a super creative guy who's written a book of poetry. He does spoken word and I sent him this Ted Talk that I recently came across and he's like, “man, I see stuff like this and feel like Jay, I'm not even doing anything” and I said “man, I'm not going to let you believe that lie to enemy.”

He wrote a book, he produced 500 copies. The other day, he told me he sold 450. I said brother is 450 people who are better because of you than before you set out to do this. Everybody has a part to play and in it, it says that the people had a mind to work and the prayer was that they would have strong hands for what's going on in front of him. So, this wasn't an easy task. It says, you got to make up your mind right now that you're going to be committed to the work that's before us. City been busted up for years. Nobody has stepped up but God stirred this man, Nehemiah's heart to be the one to stand in the gap and say, “God, I want to be the man that you're going to send. I'm willing to step up and do it, surround me with people who are lying hard and who are ready to take charge” and everybody says, “you know what? I don't have much. I might just have a rake, I might have a shovel, I might have a little blower, I might have a little pushing

lawnmower, but I'm going to do what I can within my sphere of influence" and that's all we can do.

We have to be people who understand the position. We have to be like the sons of Issachar who could read the times and understand that "you know what? this is my time. This is my moment." I'm going to step into it. I'm going to have the proper posture, but I want to be in position When God says, "go I'm ready to take off." I didn't realize it when we left Atlanta but I was a little bit out of shape and first three months you move to a place like D.C. I got a bike at that time, I was driving my car one day or week to go to church on Sundays. Everywhere else I jog, rode my bike. Metro -- I love D.C. for that. Beautiful public transit system. My wife bought me a bike. We get after it. I lost 20 pounds at first three months there.

I was like, I didn't know I had that much to lose but God was faithful in it but I realized that was part of my process to get in the position that God wanted me to be. So, we have to have a certain posture of humility of accountability of a willingness to say, "I don't know much. I know a little bit of what I know God but you know everything." So, I want you to use me for your glory and then I want to be in a position to be able to influence every single person around me. So, I'm going with a small mentality never thinking that I'm going to be sitting in a room with people in seats of power to influence them in their hearts that they can start to put in motion other things that will be beneficial, helpful, change their life. Challenge their thinking and so we have to be people who are willing to put ourselves in position.

Last thing about position, I love scripture and Nehemiah talks about why they're working to rebuild the walls. It says they had a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other because Nehemiah understood that everybody was not on board with this whole new coming into town. They put all types of mold of sand. Are you trying to build your own kingdom? Are you trying to come in and do your own thing? and he's like, listen to me very clearly when God has called you to something. I'm going to need you to have your hammer, your screwdriver, your drilling work like crazy to do what I've called you to do, but understand that you might have to keep a little bank ahead in you, I have a little shank action because this going to be some people not on board with what you doing, and you just got to -- you got to be able to build and you got to be able to protect.

Tool in one hand, a weapon in the other. As a husband, I'm always living in that dual nature that I'm working to build up my relationship with my wife, but at the same time I'm working like a madman to make sure I'm doing all I can to protect it. Raising our children. We build them up. We pour God wisdom in them. We encourage them. We love them. We do the best that we know to do and we also got to protect them at the same time but these people were in a position where they built and they protect it.

Tool in one hand and weapon in the other. Final thought, you got the posture of Nehemiah's heart. You got the position of God's people and probably my favorite part in the entire story is found in Nehemiah 6. They've organized -- they brought people together and they get to a place. It says Verse 15. So, the wall was finished on the 25 day of the month Elul in 52 days. Fifty-two days, and we see that as they've had the right posture and the right position they now walk into the power of God's faithfulness. Seven weeks and three days it took to rebuild something that had been torn down for years.

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I'm sure people had walked by that wall thousands of times just stepped over and said that has nothing to do with me but God knew that the restoration of that would serve as a symbol and a hope and an encouragement to other people and he sent Nehemiah to have a heart, to have a burden for it. People have been talking about it. Somebody had to do that but Nehemiah was the one to step up and say I'm going to go, I don't know how it's going to work out how or it's going to shake out but it took him 52 days for God to prove his faithfulness. I know I'm preaching to the choir here but God's word doesn't return void.

Let me remind somebody else in this room that our circumstances don't affect God's sovereignty. We all going to go through stuff. We all going to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but it's not going to overtake us. We're all going to run up against some resistance, but James tells us to count it all joy. We're going to run into things for living a Godly life. Don't be surprised, don't let it catch you off-guard. God says, I've got you, he's been faithful from the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He's going to be faithful through the days of Jonathan, Joseph, and Judah. I got to stand on that, I got to believe in that even when every

circumstance is saying otherwise because my circumstances don't dictate his sovereignty if anything my circumstances is God's way of saying, you know what? Just let me show them how bad I am. My wife and I drive over here tonight. We're just recounting. I keep a journal of Thanksgiving, bishop taught me that 20 years ago and I just journal God's faithfulness.

So that in times where I'm tempted to doubt why I'm feeling weak where I feel like I might be in a position like, God I don't know how you going to come through. I have to go to remind myself of what God has already done and I read and I say, you know what God? You're right, you're absolutely 100% right. You did it then your word declares that you're the same yesterday, today, and forever and so we have to stand in that truth church. We have to walk in that, we have to you know, if we allow media and the culture to dictate what we feel and how we ought to respond in certain situations. We'd be up the creek without a paddle but God's faithfulness is sure and so just like Nehemiah, I believe with all my heart that the Lord wants to restore our joy.

He wants to restore the joy of our Salvation. He wants to restore that joy when we first believed. He wants to restore the joy of our calling. He wants to restore just joy and daily living. I don't know about you all. In D.C. everything is like this. So, we got about a third of the house for three times the price. No yard, so our kids, you know quarantine, we love them but there's nowhere to send them. Everything is closed, so we climbing on each other and in the midst of that you lose a little bit of your joy in your daily living but God wants to restore that joy to say, you know, God you are so faithful, you're so good, you're so awesome, you're so wonderful. I want to just be able to smile in the midst of everything that's going on, that well of joy that I used to draw from back in the day, God restore it.

Restore my joy, restore your joy to your people. God wants to do that. I believe God wants to redeem our time. My goodness, I didn't realize how much time I had until he gifted it to me in the midst of COVID. He gave me time to love my wife. He gave me time to study her and understand her better. He gave me time to spend time with my kids like I hadn't because I've been distracted with too much busyness. He wants us to redeem our time. He wants us to redeem our time to the things that matter most and then finally, I believe he wants to renew our vision the Proverbs tells us without vision we perish.

Without it -- we don't know the rudder. We don't know the way that we're supposed to go and so having our vision renewed. It's something about having a fresh breath. It's something about having the fresh wind of the spirit blown into your sails when you've been churning and churning and churning and praying and hoping and believing and God says now is the time. I've got to help renew some vision for you. I got to send some people in your life to speak hope and life and encouragement into you and it's just amazing how God works. I love that as we line up our hearts to be pastured with his and we make sure we position ourselves to be in lockstep with other believers who are going to encourage us and motivate us and challenge us and push us and make us uncomfortable on the level where we are so that we can run after what God has called us to and then we see the power of God's faithfulness.

As I close, I just want to share I had a conversation recently with a young man in D.C. who was asking he has a heart for Ministry and he said, "man, tell me your story" and I said, "to be honest with you. I've known that I was called to Ministry since I was seven years old.

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He said, "that's awesome man. How did you know?" I said, "I don't know, I just knew" I live like a fool for the next 16 years until God got a hold of my heart at 23. It really started to shift some things in my life. I said, but "truthfully my mother's mother encouraged me to pursue Ministry all of my life and I never understood why until she passed away" 24 years ago now but I learned back in 1940. My grandmother was first African American woman to go to Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. She never talked about it when she was alive. When I preached my first sermon at 17. She was there to encourage me. Every time I had a question, she say, "let's pray about it together" and I just standing that hope that her heart was right.

She understood what God had placed and trusted in my stewardship and I just want to challenge all of us in this space tonight that I pray that every single person knows whatever it is that you've been given to steward that you do with well, that you don't take it for granted, that you give everything that you can lay your head down at night every night saying, "God, I gave it

everything that I had” God honors that, God honors that. You’d be amazed and I know I’m speaking to people of faith, but I just want to challenge you that there is from faith to faith is from glory to glory and I want to just challenge us all that there levels and layers and dimensions of faith and glory that God wants us to step into and experience but it’s going to take the right posture. It’s going to take the right position. It’s going to take acknowledging the power of God’s faithfulness.

So, Jesus, I just want to say thank you tonight. I thank you God that your faithfulness is not predicated upon what we do God. I thank you that you love us just because we are made in your image and after our likeness and there’s a fatherly pride in us that will never understand maybe until we get to heaven. But God, I’m just thankful that you’ve called us that you’ve equipped us that you’ve placed us on a course God and God I pray that you would help us all to be even more faithful each and every day of our lives God. We trust you with our time. We trust you with our hearts. We trust you with our vision God and I pray that we would live out the full life that you have intended for us to live God.

So, I pray that our hearts are always posture and humility to you that we start each and every day acknowledging your greatness and your sovereignty and your dominion and your power God and then I pray that we would just line our lives up that we would take every single step because you are the one that directs our steps and you’re the one that lights our pathway and so for that we’re thankful God. God, I thank you for healing. I thank you for healing our minds. I thank you for healing our bodies. I thank you for healing our emotions God that we can be the best versions of ourselves who are hurt in a dying world.

God, I pray that you would continue to give us all favor that your spirit would go before us that you would or deigned divine appointments God for us to step into in full faith God not knowing the outcome, but we just want to move ahead because we are being obedient to you and so God, I just pray your hand continue to be upon us God I pray that our hearts would continue to be turned towards heaven and humble under your great mighty hand.

God, I thank you for the blessing of this life that you’ve given us to live. I thank you for the blessing of our families, of our spouses,

of our children, of our neighbors, of our co-workers, of everybody that we get to come in contact with Lord. God we're thankful. It's a privilege and we love you God. We pray these things in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus. Amen. God bless you.

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