

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

OCTOBER 2002

“THOSE POOR PEOPLE—THEY DON’T LIVE IN THE CITY!”

BY TIM KELLER

I try to follow the traditional discipline of praying and reading through the Psalms every month. On the morning of the 22nd each month I get to Psalm 107. This psalm continually reminds me how different the Bible’s attitude toward cities is from that of modern Christians.

Psalm 107 speaks of a group of wandering people “finding no way to a city where they could settle....and their lives ebbed away.” (vv.4-5) But then “they cried out to the Lord...and he led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the Lord...” (vv.6-8) The Lord’s great mercy of bringing them to ‘a city where

they could settle’ is recounted later in the Psalm as well (v.36). The assumption of the psalm is

*“...finding no way
to a city where
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their lives
ebbed away.”*

that living in a city is something to be desired. “Look at those poor people,” the psalmist is saying. “They don’t live in the

city. How bad for them!”

As I’ve read through the Bible over the years I’ve come to see that even the Bible’s passing references to the city reveal a remarkably positive regard. This is so far from the average Christian’s attitude toward cities that we tend to screen it out and fail to notice it. Why would the Biblical authors think of cities so positively?

***Cities are places of security—
look at the wall!***

When Nehemiah heard the report that “the wall of Jerusalem is broken down...” he “sat down and wept.”

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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD—INVESTING IN OUR MISSION

BY DAVID BISGROVE

This month begins a season highlighting the Scripture’s teaching on finances and the relevance of that teaching to Redeemer’s Mission. It is a time to look back and celebrate God’s faithfulness to Redeemer through the generosity of its members, attendees, and friends. For example, individuals and churches from around the world contributed to the needs of our church and city as a result of the WTC attack. Also, the generous gifts to the diaconate have allowed that ministry to meet the needs of the growing number of people in our congregation who are out of work and struggling to

make their way in New York during this difficult time. We are also grateful for the growing number of people who attend our worship services each week, many of whom give regularly to support the ongoing operating expenses of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (2002 Annual Budget = \$5.5M.)

But this season also allows us to look ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing us in 2003. With an average of approximately 600 more

people attending services than only one year ago, our Counseling Center is seeing 50% more clients, our Church Planting Center is directly involved in overseeing more than 20 church plants, and our Marketplace Ministry (see September Newsletter) is being launched amid much anticipation. The upcoming year promises to be full of new ways to expand Redeemer’s mission of bringing the Gospel

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- STEVE SACKS CD

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"THOSE POOR PEOPLE—THEY DON'T LIVE IN THE CITY!"

(Nehemiah 1:3-4) Why? It was not just nostalgia for architecture. A city without a wall was not a city at all. (cf. Proverbs 25:28) Cities were places of security and safety. The density of population made it possible to put up a wall for the citizens to protect themselves from dangerous animals, robbers, and armies. In those days it was only in cities that human beings lived in enough safety and stability to actually begin to develop 'civilization' (a word that literally means city-ization.) This then is the first reason why the psalmist is sorry for the people who don't live in a city. They do not live in security.

Cities are places of justice—look at the gate!

When Israel entered the promised land, God mandated that they choose six "cities of refuge." (Numbers 35:9-34) "Select...your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly." (Numbers 35:11-12). Even in the land of Israel, it was difficult if not impossible to maintain justice away from city life. Out in the countryside or the villages it was "every man for himself." If someone was killed, the victim's family would destroy the perpetrator (and usually all of his family as well) regardless of motive or circumstances.

But in cities it was possible to live by rule of law and justice. That is why God puts his judges

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in cities. Often trials and hearings were conducted by elders who sat in the gate of the city, symbolizing this deep identification of the city with justice. (cf. Proverbs 22: 22 - Do not oppress the poor...in the gate.) This is the second reason the psalmist is sorry for people who don't live in a city. They can be exploited and have no recourse to justice.

Cities are places of creativity—look at the square!

Frequently the Old Testament will speak of a city and (literally) "its daughters." (see Numbers 21:25,32; 32:42; Josh 15:45,47; 17:16; Judges 1:27; 11:26.) The NIV translates this 'its surrounding settlements' but the word "daughters" shows there is more going on here than just geographic proximity. From the beginning, cities have been centers of cultural power. Changes develop in the city and from there flow out into the metropolitan regions of city influence. Why? At the center of cities has traditionally been some common space—often called a 'town square' or 'marketplace'—that served as both a place for and a symbol of how people make commercial, political, social, and cultural connections in cities.

In cities the number and diversity of human connections that are possible far outnumber

those which might take place anywhere else. (As testimony to this fact, the purpose of a convention is connection—a place people make connection with expertise, peers, money, and other resources—but the best way to facilitate these connections is to create a temporary city!) All the connections lead in the end to creativity—new alliances, new ideas, new art, and new movements. This is the third reason people who don't live in a city are at a disadvantage. They are marginalized, cut off from the centers of cultural forging.

Cities are places of faith—look at the tower!

Archaeologists tell us that the very first cities were all built around a single 'skyscraper.' The shrine-cities of Mesopotamia were built around a 'ziggurat,' a tall building that was a temple. People moved to the cities in order to be near the god, to worship it and be in a relationship to it. The city was where the priests lived, and where the temple mediated the presence of the deity. (see Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 1961.) But surely modern cities are different? Not at all.

The Roman city's 'high tower'

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REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
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services at 7:00

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THOSE POOR PEOPLE ...

was the castle, the medieval city's was the cathedral, and the modern city's highest towers are office buildings. What hasn't changed is that the highest buildings indicate the city's faith, namely, what most people look to as ultimate value which provides meaning for their lives. Today people absolutely driven by the city's emphasis on looks and success and money want to imagine themselves 'irreligious'—but cities don't allow that in their inhabitants. So even today, the so-called 'secular city' is a place where people go to find and devote themselves in faith to those things that will provide them with significance. The skyscrapers tell us what the majority-faith of a city is.

Is this view of cities possible today?

"But wait," you may object. "I can understand how in early days cities were places of security and so on, but not any more. And doesn't the Bible denounce cities as places of violence and oppression?" Of course the Bible denounces many cities as places of violence, oppression, and of unbelief. The prophets in particular denounced the urban life of Israel with great fierceness. (e.g. "you rulers who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness...her leaders rule for a bribe...her prophets tell fortunes for money..." Micah 3:9-11) But my point is that the Bible's attitude is never "it's the city—so what do you expect?" but rather "cities aren't supposed to be like this!" That assumption—a positive view of what cities are made to be—is the very basis for the vehemence of the denunciations. Most Christians today do not share this Biblical view. Of course cities are

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NOVEMBER IS OFFICER NOMINATION MONTH

During the entire month of November, Redeemer will be accepting nominations for the offices of elder, deacon and deaconess. Due to the depressed economy, increased needs within the Redeemer community have stretched our deacons and deaconesses. Now more than ever, the diaconate needs qualified Redeemer members to serve. If you are a member, please consider whether you or someone you know, who is also a member, could serve as deacon or deaconess. The Session also is in need of new elders.

Acts 6:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13

The diaconate exists to express in practical ways Christ's command to all believers to show mercy. Deacons and deaconesses offer help to those in crisis or challenging situations by assessing their needs and working together to find solutions. Depending on the circumstances, they may provide social, emotional, physical, and/or financial support. The diaconate also strives to link

individuals to the broader Christian community within Redeemer in the hopes that they will feel Christ's love long beyond their experience with the diaconate.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9

The elders serve on the Session and provide spiritual leadership to the congregation through oversight of Redeemer ministries, leaders and members.

How Do I Nominate Someone?

You must be a member to nominate another member. First ask the person that you want to nominate for elder, deacon or deaconess if he or she is a member and willing to be considered for the office. Obtain a nomination form from Redeemer's website (www.Redeemer.com) or the information table at all services and then fax their name(s) with your signature to the church office to the attention of Andrea Clark at 212.808.4465. Nominations open on November 1, 2002, and end on November 30, 2002.

NEW OFFICER QUALIFICATIONS

Starting this November 2002 when we receive officer nominations, the following qualifications will be necessary. All nominees for office must be:

1. A Christian for at least three years and a Redeemer member for at least one year;

OR

2. A Christian for at least three years and a regular Redeemer attendee who has been committed to Redeemer as their primary place of worship for at least two years and a member for at least half a year of the two years they have been attending Redeemer.

No non-member nominations can be accepted.

REDEEMER'S NEXT OPEN FORUM:

SURPRISED BY JOY
OCTOBER 6, 2002

An evening of R&B tunes performed by George Merritt, Rozz Morehead, Ken Prymus, Calvin Earl, Lorraine Ferro. Lecture by Dr. Timothy Keller. Open-mic Question and Answer follows lecture.

Hunter College Auditorium
(69th St. & Park Avenue)

Admission is free.

*Watch for more info
on the next Open Forum:*

Sex and the End of Loneliness

Opera arias and duets performed by Mark Oswald, Gregory Turay and others
November 10, 2002.

"LOOK TO THE SKY" STEVE SACKS CD

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT
REDEEMER DIACONATE

Title: Look to the Sky



Description: Jazz album of New York songs inspired by the events of 9-11 and following. Redeemer performers on the CD also include: Tom Jennings, Jon Cowherd, John Patitucci, Meg Okura, Terry Silverlight.

About Steve Sacks: Steve was the saxophonist for the Redeemer evening band from 1989-1996. We still sing many of his original worship songs in the evening services. Steve and his wife Tomoko live in Tokyo, where Steve is a jazz musician, and the leader of the Tokyo branch of the International Arts Movement.

All proceeds will go to the Redeemer Diaconate in appreciation for their 9-11 relief work.

Price: \$15

Where to get it: purchase CD at the on-line store at www.redeemer.com, or at the tape table following services.

2002 VOLUNTEER BBQ



The before 2:00 crowd experienced the hot sun and humid weather conditions with little shade until Brad and Reasmey Winslow (West Side Sunday Operations Coordinator) came to our rescue with umbrellas and a large tarp to create some shade. Furthermore, we enjoyed innovative individuals, such as David Cook (Book Ministry Coordinator), who took pieces of fruit and vegetables to play a game of chess.

On Saturday, August 17, it was that time again – our annual Sunday Service Ministries Volunteer BBQ on Roosevelt Island. This year, there's one significant difference ... unexpected location change! This is the first time other groups beat us to the coveted Lighthouse Park location ... and we arrived there early!

Our mission for the day was to feed the hungry, quench the thirsty, and provide rest for the sacrificial and well-deserved volunteers at Redeemer. Because the hungry, thirsty and tired were soon to come, we rushed to find another location that provided a cooking grill, and we did – Whew!

...INVESTING IN OUR MISSION

of Jesus Christ to bear on every aspect of our lives, our church, and our city. The purpose of the stewardship season is to see how we can all participate in investing in this mission.

Practically, that means meeting our 4th Quarter giving budget. We have been running behind for the last several months (\$110,000 at the time of this printing), and are praying that God will work through our congregation and friends to meet our year-end needs. Also, because giving to the work of God's kingdom is an act of worship (Psalm 24:1, Deuteronomy 8:18) and a reflection of our spiritual health (Luke 12:33-34), it means taking time to meditate on what the Bible says about how we are to invest our material resources.

To that end, we have prepared the following resources,

all of which are available at www.redeemer.com:

1. A two-week Fellowship

"The purpose of the stewardship season is to see how we can all participate in investing in this mission."

Group Study designed to facilitate discussion about the Scripture's teaching on money. It also contains practical infor-

mation on how to plan your giving.

2. A 20 day devotional for your personal or group use. These are short reflections to assist you in diagnosing your own spiritual condition as it relates to your finances.

3. Several sermons by Tim Keller on stewardship and money. These also can be used as a catalyst for small group discussions, as well as helping you understand how the Gospel liberates us to be radically generous for the sake of God's kingdom.

Next month I will provide an article based on the two week Fellowship Group Study referenced above and in the coming months I will keep you updated on Redeemer's financial status. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at david@redeemer.com.

(MORE) 2002 VOLUNTEER BBQ

One good thing about having the BBQ on Roosevelt Island is that - it's an island! From our new location we were able to spot confused volunteers walking by to wave them down before they went too far. But some, I know, we didn't catch - my apologies go to them.

This year, we have two photos - The before 2:00 crowd, and the after 2:00 crowd.

If you are interested in being a part of our Sunday Service Ministries team (Books, Communion, Information Center, Usher and Welcome Center Ministries) and wish to join us at our next year's BBQ, email elaine@redeemer.com.



The after 2:00 crowd experienced weather of a different kind: sun - humidity - clouds - rain - downpour - sun, in a short period of time. It did make for some interesting experiences talking and interacting with one another with wet hair, wet food, and wet clothes. However, everyone seemed to have a good time despite the weather.

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“THOSE POOR PEOPLE—THEY DON’T LIVE IN THE CITY!”

now broken by sin, just as families and churches are. Everything participates in the Fall of the human race into sin. But we don’t discard family life—we seek to rehabilitate it by God’s grace in the Spirit. The same should be true for cities.

God’s urban alternative

When Israel made Jerusalem its capital, God directed that the temple be built on Zion, an elevation within the city, so that it rose above the city as its ‘skyscraper.’ But unlike the skyscrapers of the “city of man,” designed for their builders’ own prosperity (e.g. the skyscraper of Babel built “to make a name for ourselves”-Gen 11:4), God’s city is different. “In the city of our God, his holy mountain is beautiful in elevation—the joy of the whole earth.” (Psalm 48:2) The urban society God wants is based on service, not selfishness, and on bringing joy to the whole world with its cultural riches, not just the individuals within it.

Jesus probably had Psalm 48:2 in mind when he spoke to his disciples and said to them: “You are

the light of the world. A city on a hill...” (Matthew 5:14). Jesus calls his disciples to form a society that is an alternate city within the city.

*“The urban society
God wants is based
on service, not selfishness,
and on bringing
joy to the
whole world with
its cultural riches,
not just the
individuals within it. . .”*

A mini-city where sex, money, and power are used in life-giving ways. A mini-city where people who cannot get along outside can get along inside. A center where artists show it is possible to produce cultural products that bring hope to people rather than just despair and titillation.

Somebody might ask: “But can’t Christians be an alternative city out in the suburbs?” Well, of course. Absolutely. But I have discovered over the course of my years in New York that it is considerably easier to show the world God’s urban alternative in an actual human city. In racially homogeneous towns it is harder to show how the gospel uniquely undermines racial barriers (Ephesians 2:11ff). In places where fewer artists live it is difficult to show the gospel’s effect on art. In economically homogeneous places, physically removed from the human poverty that is so pervasive in the world, it is nearly impossible for Christians to realize how much money they are spending on themselves.

I often think, especially as a pastor, of all the Christians living out away from cities who are charged by Jesus to show the world the transforming effect of the gospel on human society and relationships. Then I think of my own context and I become very grateful for it, and say, “Those poor people! They don’t live in the city!”