

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Psalm 19

The teaching of the Lord revives the soul. (v7)

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Luke 4:14-21

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, & inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace & forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

¹All the people [of Israel] gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. ²Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men & women & all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. ³He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men & the women & those who could understand; & the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; & when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, & all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads & worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. ⁸So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, & Ezra the priest & scribe, & the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat & drink sweet wine & send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; & do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. The seventh month is busy with festivals (Trumpets *Leviticus 23:23-25*, Atonement *Leviticus 23:26-32*, New Moon *Numbers 10:10*, *Psalm 81:4*, Booths *Leviticus 23:33-36, 42-43*), as well as the anniversary of rebuilding the altar (*Ezra 3:1-3*) & having just completed the city walls & received the temple gifts a couple weeks or so earlier (*Nehemiah 6:15, 7:66-73*). How does this story illustrate the following Scriptures? See *Psalms 30:3-5, 11-12, 126:1-6; Isaiah 61:1-3; Jeremiah 31:13*
2. Now, what connections can you find with the Gospel reading? Hint: look for themes, parallel ideas, inversions, reversals, similarities, extensions, metaphors, actions, vocabulary, grammar, etc. Remember *John 1:1-5, 14-18*.

EACH OTHER- *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. The Water Gate was on the east side of the city (placing the Temple to its west). Adam & Eve were exiled to the east of Eden. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land from the east. First, explain this simple symbolism for the Gate. Second, when has your congregation provided you a joyful homecoming (even if bittersweet) after a period of "exile" (due to your own "issues/baggage")?
4. Can you think of a time when hearing a particular scripture made you weep for joy, like the people in our lesson from *Nehemiah*?*
(*#4, 5 courtesy Rev. Nathan Hilbert, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Athens, GA)

NEIGHBORS- *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. Whom do you know that is hungry to learn more about God? How can you encourage & support their growth?* Write their names down (at least 3 people) & commit to praying daily for them & your role in their life. Keep this up for at least the next 30 days. Keep notes/journal on your prayers & what happens.
6. Certain national retailers such as Chick-Fil-A & Hobby Lobby insist on being closed on Sundays. How does a common day off serve the common good of their employees & owners/stockholders? How does this practice set a good example to other mass-market retailers? *Note: don't mistake this business practice for evangelism or worship etc.*

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Third Sunday after Epiphany
Series: Anointed; Now What?

01.23.22
Rev. Jared Stillions, STS

Serving God

As evangelists, we proclaim the Scriptures in words of grace & lives of faithfulness

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: Then [Ezra] said to [the people], “Go your way, eat the fat & drink sweet wine & send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; & do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (v10)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, & to proclaim release to the captives. (Luke 4:18)

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