
Restored from Ruins:
“True Hope for Real Life”
Nehemiah 1: 1-4

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.” - Augustine

“In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity... But he goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him.” C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

“The soul that on Jesus relies,
He'll never, no never deceive;
He freely and faithfully gives
More blessings than we can conceive.
Yea, down to old age he will keep,
Nor will he forsake us at last;
He knows and is known by his sheep;
They're his, and he will hold them fast.”

- William Gadsby

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- What is your experience with the book of Nehemiah? What are you hoping to gain from this fall's study of this particular book of the Bible?
- The sermon asserted that we must look over the shoulders of the historical Nehemiah to the Ultimate Nehemiah. How does Nehemiah's life mirror and prepare for the work of Christ?
- How is the book of Nehemiah fitting into and developing the bigger story of God's redemption? Why is it crucial to read the Bible this way?
- Why is it so important to move beyond treating Nehemiah and the other Bible characters as heroes and models? On the other hand, what is useful and exemplary about Nehemiah's life and action that we should emulate? How are we to balance the two - the modeling and the sign pointing to Christ?
- What do you make of Augustine's definition of hope? Which of the two beautiful daughters resonate more with you? Why?
 - What about the current state of the Church and God's Kingdom seems to be in ruin or compromised?
 - Where are those needs calling for your anger and courage?