
**Restored from Ruins:
“The Good Hand of God”
Nehemiah 2: 1-20**

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“Suffering makes people bitter or it makes people beautiful. How was Joseph able to forgive his brothers? He realized that there was an invisible hand that was always controlling his life. He entrusted himself to those two hands. Entrust yourself to those hands. They are good hands.” - Dustin Salter

“In friendship...we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another...the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting--any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking no chances. A secret master of ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends, "Ye have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another." The friendship is not a reward for our discriminating and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others.” - C.S. Lewis

*“The Lord upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.” - Psalm 145: 14-17 131: 3*

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?
- Throughout this passage, Nehemiah gives testimony to the “good hand of God” being upon him.
 - What is Nehemiah trying to give voice to by using the imagery of God’s hand being upon him?
 - Have there been instances in your life that you sensed God’s special favor or intervention in your life? What was it like? Were you aware in the moment or in reflection or both?
 - If God has a “good hand”, does he also have a “bad hand” or a “backhand”? Have you sensed or experienced that side or providence, too?
- What do you make of CS Lewis’ assertion above that there are no chances or coincidences in our lives, that, in fact, God is a “secret master of ceremonies” orchestrating it all.
 - What frustrations, comforts, or questions does that raise for you?
 - How do you see the intricacy of God’s providence at work in this passage?
- The sermon emphasized that when God’s hand is upon us we ask, we act, and we extend the blessing to others.
 - Which of these responses to God’s hand at work in your life comes easiest for you?
 - Which presents the most friction?
 - How does our image of God complicate or motivate our response to his hand at work?