

January 12, 2025

Worship | 8:15 and 11 am

Livestream | 11 am



LEXINGTON

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For God's glory, we are making disciples of Jesus as we worship, love, and serve.

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. We invite you to experience the meaning of the Gospel through this service, which reflects both ancient and modern elements of Christian worship. When we gather as a worshipping community, we enter into a dialogue with the living God. God calls us into worship, we rejoice in the hope of the Gospel, confess our sins, lament the brokenness of our world, give our offerings, and hear God's Word read and preached. We hope that by worshipping with us, you will experience joy and hope from a community of people who love Jesus.

At Lexington Presbyterian Church, for God's glory, we are making disciples of Jesus as we worship, love, and serve.

Complete our Connect Card at lexpreschurch.com/connect to join us on mission!

General inquiries: hello@lexpreschurch.com

LORD'S DAY WORSHIP

* Congregation, please stand if able

Prelude

PRAISE

Updates | Following Christ Together

* Call to Worship | Psalm 100

*Leader: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
 Serve the LORD with gladness!
 Come into his presence with singing!*

All: Know that the LORD, he is God!
 It is he who made us, and we are his;
 we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

*Leader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
 and his courts with praise!
 Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

All: For the LORD is good;
 his steadfast love endures forever,
 and his faithfulness to all generations.

* All People That on Earth Do Dwell-Trinity Hymnal No. 1



1. All peo - ple that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheer - ful
2. The Lord ye know is God in - deed; with - out our aid he did us
3. O en - ter then his gates with praise, ap - proach with joy his courts un -
4. For why? The Lord our God is good, his mer - cy is for - ev - er



voice; him serve with fear, his praise forthtell, come ye be - fore him and re-joyce.
make; we are his folk, he doth us feed, and for his sheep he doth us take.
to; praise, laud, and bless his name al - ways, for it is seem - ly so to do.
sure; his truth at all times firm - ly stood, and shall from age to age en - dure.

Trinity Hymnal No. 1

TEXT: Psalm 100; William Kethe, 1561

TUNE (OLD HUNDREDDTH): Louis Bourgeois's, *Genevan Psalter*, 1551

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* Prayer of Invocation

* **Old Testament Scripture Reading** | Ezra 1:1-11 | Pew Bible p. 389

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. And this was the number of them: 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels; all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

Christ, the True and Better



1.Christ, the true and bet-ter A - dam, Son of God and son of man,
 2.Christ, the true and bet-ter Is - aac, hum - ble Son of sac - ri - fice,
 3.Christ, the true and bet-ter Mo - ses, called to lead a peo - ple home,
 4.Christ, the true and bet-ter Da - vid, low - ly shep - herd, might - y king.



who, when temp - ted in the gar - den, nev - er yield - ed, nev - er sinned.
 who would climb the fear - ful moun - tain, there to of - fer up His life.
 stand - ing bold to earth - ly pow - ers, God's great glo - ry to be known.
 He the cham - pion in the bat - tle; where, O death, is now thy sting?



He who makes the man - y right - eous brings us back to life a - gain.
 Laid with faith up - on the al - tar, fath - er's joy and on - ly son;
 With His arms stretched wide to heav - en, see the wa - ters part in two;
 In our place He bled and con - quered; crown Him Lord of maj - es - ty.



Dy - ing, He re - versed the curse; then ris - ing crushed the ser - pent's head. *(to verse 2)*
 there sal - va - tion was pro - vid - ed, oh what full and bound - less love.
 see, the veil is torn for - ev - er, cleansed with blood we pass now through.
 His shall be the throne for - ev - er; we shall e'er His peo - ple be.

Chorus



A - men, a - men, from be - gin - ing to end.



Christ the sto - ry, His the glo - ry; al - le - lu - ia, a - men.

Words and Music by Matt Boswell, Keith Getty, and Matt Papa; arr. Grant Wall
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RENEWAL

Call to Confession | Ezra 9:10-11

Leader: “And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness.

Corporate Confession of Sin | From the Book of Common Worship

All: Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.
We have offended against Your holy laws.
We have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.
And there is no health in us.
But now, O Lord, please have mercy upon us,
miserable sinners and offenders of Your holy will.
Spare those who confess their transgressions,
and restore those who are penitent,
according to Your promises declared to this world in Christ Jesus our Lord.
And now grant, most merciful Father,
for Jesus' sake that we may live hereafter a godly,
righteous, and holy life, to the glory of Your gracious name.
We ask for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Silent Confession

* **Words of Comfort** | Psalm III:7-9

*Leader: The works of his hands are faithful and just;
 all his precepts are trustworthy;
 they are established forever and ever,
 to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.
 He sent redemption to his people;
 he has commanded his covenant forever.
 Holy and awesome is his name!*

* **Passing of the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

* God of Grace and God of Glory

1. God of grace and God of glo - ry, on Thy peo - ple
 2. Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us scorn Thy Christ, as -
 3. Cure Thy chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness, bend our pride to
 4. Set our feet on loft - y plac - es; gird our lives that

pour Thy power; crown Thine an - cient Church - 's sto - ry,
 sail His ways! Fears and doubts too long have bound us,
 Thy con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,
 they may be ar - mored with all Christ - like grac - es

bring her bud to glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom,
 free our hearts to work and praise. Grant us wis - dom,
 rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom,
 in the fight to set men free. Grant us wis - dom,

grant us cour - age for the fac - ing of this hour,
 grant us cour - age for the liv - ing of these days,
 grant us cour - age, lest we miss Thy king - dom's goal,
 grant us cour - age, that we fail not man nor Thee,

for the fac - ing of this hour.
 for the liv - ing of these days.
 lest we miss Thy king - dom's goal.
 that we fail not man nor Thee!

TEXT: Harry Emerson Fosdick, 1930
 TUNE (RHONDDA): John Hughes, 1905
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Friendship Register

Kindly remember to give your neighbor the Friendship Register. Once it reaches the end of the pew, then please pass it back. Making acquaintances with guests and fostering friendships within the larger church family is the goal of this register. Starting from the middle aisle, the register is located at the head of each pew. Please, make sure to write your name legibly.

Worship Through Giving

The offering is a way for members and friends of Lexington Presbyterian to present the substance of their whole lives to God. Please feel no pressure to give.

Ways to give:

- You may use the offering plates.
- Go to “Giving” on your Church Center mobile app or lexpres.churchcenter.com.
- Text2Give: text any dollar amount to 84321.

Speak, O Lord [8:15 a.m. only]



1. Speak, O Lord, as we come to You to re-ceive the food of Your Ho - ly Word.
2. Teach us, Lord, full o - be - di - ence, ho - ly rev - er - ence, true hu - mil - i - ty.
3. Speak, O Lord, and re - new our minds; help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.



Take Your truth, plant it deep in us; shape and fash - ion us in Your like - ness, that the Test our thoughts and our at - ti - tudes in the ra - di - ance of Your pur - i - ty. Cause our Truths un - changed from the dawn of time that will ech - o down through e - ter - ni - ty. And by



light of Christ might be seen to - day in our acts of love and our deeds of _faith. faith to rise, cause our eyes to see Your ma - jes - tic love and au - thor - i - ty. grace we'll stand on Your prom - is - es, and by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.



Speak, O Lord, and ful - fill in us all Your pur - pos - es for Your glo - ry. Words of pow'r that can nev - er fail; let their truth pre - vail o - ver un - be - lief. Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built and the earth is filled with Your glo - ry.

Words and Music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

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Be Not Afraid | Choir Anthem [11 a.m. only]

Be not afraid: For I have redeemed you;
Be not afraid: I have called you by name.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
when you pass through the floods, they will not sweep o'er you;
when you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed;
you are mine, you are precious in my sight.

Be not afraid: For I have redeemed you;
Be not afraid: I have called you by name.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
when you pass through the floods, they will not sweep o'er you;
when you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed;
you are mine, you are precious in my sight.

My love for you is everlasting,
my love for you shall have no end.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
when you pass through the floods, they will not sweep o'er you;
when you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed.
You are mine, you are precious in my sight, you are precious in my sight.
You are precious in my sight.

Based on Isaiah 43:1-4

Words and Music by Craig Courtney
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* The Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all

The first system of musical notation for the Doxology. It consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in 2/4 time and G major. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all". The bass staff contains the accompaniment. The first measure of the treble staff has a fermata over the final note.

creatures here below; praise him above, ye heav'nly host:

The second system of musical notation. The treble staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: "creatures here below; praise him above, ye heav'nly host:". The bass staff continues the accompaniment. The first measure of the treble staff has a fermata over the final note.

praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The third system of musical notation. The treble staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: "praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.". The bass staff continues the accompaniment. The first measure of the treble staff has a fermata over the final note.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1674
Tune (OLD HUNDREDTH): Louis Bourgeois, 1551
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* Offertory Prayer

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Corporate Prayer

Children's Sermon | "That One Small Spot"

* Scripture Reading | Nehemiah 1:I-II | p. 398

¹ The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the

prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Sermon | A Narrative Study of Nehemiah

1. Understanding Nehemiah and Ezra's Historical and Cultural Context in Redemptive History

Rev. Dr. Curt McDaniel

Sermon Notes

Rebuilding Walls, Restoring Hope A Narrative Study of Nehemiah

This section of Scripture-OT history likely exposes the window of time that most Christians know *the least about* (with the exception of Numbers!). Yet there are many diamonds of thought, gleaned by reflecting on the “Nehemiah Memoirs” (in his book), and the “Ezra Memoirs” (in his book) that help us understand many concepts of OT theology (that find their fulfillment in Christ) and in the development of the community of faith that returned to the land after the Babylonian captivity (that find their fulfillment in the Church):

“More than half this book is a personal record, punctuated with ‘asides’ and frank comments which make it (in such parts) one of the liveliest pieces of writing in the Bible. Much of Ezra’s story was also told in the first person (Ezra 8:15-9:15), but Ezra was a quieter personality than the formidable, practical Nehemiah; he does not leap out of the page as this man does.”¹

For many years, people have studied this book (along with parallels in Ezra, Esther, Jeremiah, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) from many standpoints: leadership, conflict management, missions, and revival in particular. But one standpoint stands out above all others: **Nehemiah is a book that bursts with biblical hope.**

- i. **Historical timeline: Important dates that affect the outcomes seen in Ezra and Nehemiah.**
 - ***586 BC:** The fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (2 Chronicles 36, Daniel 1-4, Ezra 1:7, 2:1, Jeremiah 52). One of the greatest events in OT history that forged the identity of the Jewish people.
 - 562 BC: Nebuchadnezzar dies, his son Amel-Marduk succeeds him (very evil), and releases Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kings 25:27ff).
 - 560 BC: Amel-Marduk was assassinated by his brother-in-law Nergal-Sharusur.
 - 556 BC: Nergal-Sharusur dies, succeeded by Nabonidus who was more interested in religious activities than politics. He favored a Mesopotamian god instead of a Babylon

god. This brought unrest among the priests of Babylon.

This develops unrest and political instability.

- ***549 BC:** Rise of Cyrus of Persia (2 Chronicles 36:22ff, Ezra 1:1, Daniel 1:21).
- ***539 BC:** Cyrus conquers Babylon. The beginning of a major turning point for the Jews.
- ***538 BC:** Cyrus decrees the freedom for 49,000+ Jews to return to their homeland (Ezra 1, 2:64-65, Nehemiah 7:66-67). Cyrus does this deliberately in goodwill to gain favor from the Jews.
- ***537-536 BC:** The Jews begin returning to Judah to start rebuilding the Temple.
- ***536 BC:** The altar is rebuilt and sacrifices offered again (the 7th month according to Ezra 3:1-7).
- ***535 BC:** Temple rebuilding starts, then stops due to opposition (Ezra 4).
- 530 BC: Death of Cyrus
- 530-522 BC: Cyrus' son Cambyses rules, defeats Egypt in 525 BC.
- ***522-486 BC:** Darius I (The Great) rules, instability in the Persian Empire from 522-519 BC; the beginning of the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah (see their books). Important: now the government internally organizes provinces and satraps (Daniel 5:30-6:28). No doubt the satrap (governor) of Trans-Euphrates around this time inquired about the right of the Jews to rebuild the Temple.
- ***520 BC:** Darius honors Cyrus's decree and assists in the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple (Ezra 5-6).
- ***516 BC:** The Temple is completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:15). Note: Haggai begins preaching in the 2nd year of Darius (Haggai 1:1), and the Temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius (Ezra 6:13-15), thus 520-4 = 516 BC. Note: this is exactly 70 years from the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, and Jeremiah prophesied that the Jews would be in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12, 29:10).

There is repeated tension between Persia and the Greek city-states. Darius seeks to end Greek influence and sets 700,000-man army on European soil. This turned into a

disaster because he could not feed them. So, he decides to attack Athens directly. After many of his 600 ships were destroyed by storm, he sends a 2nd fleet under Datis, who made a diplomatic blunder by forcing some Greek city-states previously favorable to Persia into slavery. This turned their allegiance to Athens.

- 490 BC: Darius defeated by the Greeks on the plain of Marathon. Persia retreats, Greece left alone.
- ***486-465 BC:** Xerxes (The Greek name for “Ahasuerus” in the Hebrew, Ezra 4:6) begins reign of Persia, marries Queen Esther (Esther 2:16). Thus, Esther became queen in 479 BC (486-7 = 479, according to Esther 2:16).
- 480 BC: Greeks defeat Persians at Salamis, maintaining their independence. Xerxes instituted higher taxes because of his luxurious and extravagant lifestyle. Unrest came, marking the beginning of decay in the Persian Empire.
- ***465-424 BC:** Reign of Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7, Nehemiah 2:1, 5:14). Continuation of heavy taxes, political unrest in the Persian Empire.
- ***460-459 BC:** A revolt broke out in Egypt against the Persian rule. The Greeks assist the Egyptians, but then Persia bribes the Spartans to revolt against the Greeks. With much instability in Egypt and the Middle East, it would be feasible for Persia to do all she could to pacify Judah. So Artaxerxes sends Ezra to Judah (Ezra 7): “It may have been due to the difficulty of maintaining Persian control at the western end of the empire, and especially to trouble holding onto Egypt, that Artaxerxes supported Ezra’s journey to Judah...By endorsing a Jewish leader in Judah, the Persians may have hoped to secure a loyal buffer state on the border of Egypt.” ²
- ***458 BC:** Ezra comes to Judah, begins reform (Ezra 7ff).
- 456 BC: Egyptian revolt is stopped. Megabyzus, the Persian general (also satrap of Trans-Euphrates) who defeated the Egyptians promised his enemies that the Greek generals and the Egyptian Inaros II who were captured would be released. However, the Persian king’s mother wanted their death. So, Artaxerxes granted her request, putting Megabyzus into a bad predicament. ³
- 449 BC: Megabyzus leads a revolt against Artaxerxes.

- *445 BC: Nehemiah sent by Artaxerxes as a governor of a province (Nehemiah 2). Nehemiah was loyal to the king and could be trusted, unlike Megabyzus.
2. Conclusions drawn from this historical period:
- At first, Ezra and Nehemiah were one account (scroll) that was later divided to mark each leader's "memoir:" "We may therefore conclude by affirming that there is good reason to approach Ezra and Nehemiah as two parts of a single work and that this work is to be regarded as complete as it stands."⁴
 - Scholars have universally acknowledged a tie between First Temple Judaism (under the united monarchy of David and Solomon) with Second Temple Judaism (under Ezra and Nehemiah), yet there are recognizable changes that take place after 70 years of captivity when the Jews return to their homeland.

Pentateuchal Traditions Reflected (Continued) in Ezra-Nehemiah ⁵		
Tradition	Pentateuch	Ezra-Nehemiah
Holy people: no intermarriage with local Canaanites	Deut. 7:3	Ezra 9:2, Nehemiah 10:30-31, 13:25
Prohibition of Ammonites & Moabites in the assembly	Deut. 23:4-5	Nehemiah 13:1-2
Divine promise to return penitent Israelites from diaspora	Deut. 30:1-5	Nehemiah 1:8-9
Constructing booths for the Festival of Sukkot	Leviticus 23:42-43	Nehemiah 8:14-15
Festival sacrifices	Numbers 29:12-38	Ezra 3:4
Annual temple tax	Exodus 30:11-16	Nehemiah 10:32-33
Purification of rooms	Leviticus 14:34-45, Numbers 19:18	Nehemiah 13:8-9
Daily burnt offering	Exodus 29:38-42, Numbers 28:3-8	Ezra 3:3, 5
Sanctifying the Sabbath	Exodus 16:23, 20:8-11, 31:14, Deut. 5:12-15	Nehemiah 13:15-22
Tithes for priests and Levites	Numbers 18:25-32	Nehemiah 10:37-39
Confessing sins as a ritual act in the atonement process	Leviticus 5:5, 16:20-22, 26:40, Numbers 5:7	Ezra 10:1, Nehemiah 1:6, 9:2-3
Separating from impurity	Leviticus 10:10, 11:44-47, 20:25-26	Ezra 6:21, Nehemiah 9:2, 13:3

Indeed, something happened *during* the 70-year Babylonian captivity that altered the mindset and collective identity of the Jewish people: “As a religion with high ethical principles, Israelite religion, like Christianity, emphasized the guilt of the people. A sense of guiltiness developed that only could be removed by atonement of sins. With the

destruction of the [first] temple, this privilege had been taken away. This must be regarded as one of the major catastrophes that had overtaken the Jews.”⁶ “Now for the first time since the exile, the Jews were able to atone properly for their sins. The rebuilding of the temple was not simply an act of restoration of a venerable old building but was of the highest religious significance.”⁷

When the returning Israelites—those who were descendants (children, grandchildren) of the Babylonian captives—came back to the towns and villages near and around Jerusalem, *they brought back with them an altered collective identity*. Their mindset was different. Their actions show that they not only followed traditions from the Pentateuch, *but in practice they created new, even stricter, religious laws and ceremonial rituals that were never prescribed by the Pentateuch*. At least 9 categories⁸ have been recognized as more rigorous and meticulous in the way moral life and temple activities were conducted: intermarriage, temple practices, Sabbath observance strictness, Torah reading and interpretation, the ransom of captives, synagogue practices, priesthood purity, personal holiness, and purity practices. What this tells us is that the Jews returning to their land and starting over from “ground zero” were not simply content to continue traditions and legacies. To be sure, they kept and continued many customs and heirloom practices. At the same time, they forged a new identity coming out of catastrophe:

“The literary strands of the Hebrew Bible were contributed in large measure by ancient Israel, but the weaving was done on a Persian loom.”⁹

What we will see in the forthcoming weeks from this biblical-historical narrative are the actions of a man (Nehemiah) whose life was profoundly shaped theologically, emotionally, and personally by this changing current (mindset) happening, and who, in turn, shaped the people of God through his leadership: “Indeed, it was Israel’s memory of its own story, and the future to which that story pointed, that preserved them as a community that could play their part—small though it must have seemed—in the unfolding story of the mission of God that drives the whole biblical narrative.”¹⁰ This speaks to the centrality of biblical narrative and how God the Holy Spirit uses the power of ancient story to speak to our modern day hearts about the intimate issues of personal, spiritual, and faith community life. By looking at biblical narrative, we are confronted by:

“People facing the challenges, potentials, questions, achievements, ambiguities, puzzles, disappointments, demands, and failures that are intrinsic to life with God.

They thus invite their hearers to reflect on the equivalent specificities of their own lives in light of the stories’ implicit convictions about who God is and what human life is. ‘Such reflection needs the help of narrative with its concreteness and specificity.’”¹¹

3. Why study Nehemiah (and Ezra, and Esther, and Haggai, and Zechariah...)?

- Following 70 years of captivity and the “consequences of rootless-ness,” the descendants of the original captives come back to their homeland with a different mindset and altered collective understanding of their identity. They were a new generation seeking to forge a new identity, with leaders (Nehemiah and Ezra) that sought to present the people’s return back to the land as “the return from exile as a second Exodus.”¹² What we will see unfold in this narrative are several major components that will forge together their life as a “second temple” (redemptive) community:
 - ◇ How people respond biblically when the quandary of loss has hit them and their family line. What do you do to try to pick up the pieces of a shattered life when all that you knew from your collective identity was uprooted and transplanted? What we will see that helps them start over again fresh:
 - * The prominence of the Word of God in their life (for them at this place in OT history, the Torah).
 - * The prominence of gathered worship at the temple (corporate worship) with repentance.
 - * The priority is to work together to finish a primary objective (restore the temple, rebuild the walls).
 - * The place of celebration (when something big is completed) with community-wide rededication.
 - ◇ When people respond—mixing the above components—it bakes a cake of “biblical hope.” This hope flows into the 400 silent years and then finds its 1st-century fulfillment in Christ and in the formation of the Church. The fruit of biblical hope that we pick in the 4 Gospels and in Acts comes largely from the theological seeds that were planted 400 years before in this section of Scripture.

- Any time a leader and a resolute community seek to do something new and different that will bring good and meaningful change, there will come OPPOSITION. Nehemiah (and Ezra) both show how opposition comes and what good leaders (and the people) do to confront it. This reminds us that there will be conflict both within and outside God's people regularly, calling the community to deal with the issues and to bring resolution to conflict.
- In any community where "action is happening," there will be both joy and disappointment: "The joy of being able to return from exile must have been enormous...For those with a firm dose of optimism after Nehemiah's useful realizations and the beautiful liturgies, Ezra-Nehemiah ends with Nehemiah 13, where it is all too clear that in terrestrial life acquisitions are never definitive." ¹³ It is significant to see how to deal with both happiness and sorrow as a congregation in both worship and in work.

Personal Application:

- Are you in need of biblical hope? Are you dealing with loss? Do you find yourself feeling "disconnected" from God or from the people of God (for one reason or another)? This study is for you!
- Do you sense a need to "start over" with a new life? Do you want to know where to start? This study is for you!

Reflection:

"We shall count it to have been a successful morning if the people of God are made to rejoice in the Lord, and especially if those who have been bowed down and burdened in soul shall receive the oil of joy for mourning. It is no mean thing to comfort the Lord's mourners; it is a work especially dear to the Spirit of God, and, therefore, not to be lightly esteemed. Holy sorrow is precious before God, and is no bar to godly joy. Let it be carefully noted in connection with our first text that abounding mourning is no reason why there should not speedily be seen an equally abundant joy, for the very people who were bidden by Nehemiah and Ezra to rejoice were even then melted with penitential grief, 'for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.' The vast congregation before the water gate, under the teaching of Ezra, were awakened and cut to the heart; they felt the edge of the law of God like a sword opening up their hearts, tearing, cutting, and killing, and well might they

lament: then was the time to let them feel the gospel's balm and to hear the gospel's music, and, therefore, the former sons of thunder changed their note, and became sons of consolation, saying to them, 'This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. Go your way eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' Now that they were penitent, and sincerely turned to their God, they were bidden to rejoice. As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colors with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant coloring of delight. The glad news of the gospel can only be printed on wet paper."¹⁴

Study and Discussion Questions:

- Review and discuss the historical timeline and events. How important is it to see how these events shaped the life and identity of the Jewish people?
- When the Jews returned to their homeland after 70 years in captivity, what did they bring with them?
- The people (descendants) who return to the land bring with them “an altered collective identity.” What does this mean? How was it seen? Why is this important?
- Comment on this statement: “What do you do to try to pick up the pieces of a shattered life when all that you knew from your collective identity was uprooted and transplanted? What we will see that helps them start over again fresh: the prominence of the Word of God, the prominence of gathered worship, the priority to work together, and the place of celebration with community-wide rededication.”

Footnotes:

1. Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale OT Commentaries. D.J. Wiseman, General Editor. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979, 77.
2. Hannah K. Harrington, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. General Eds. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and Bill T. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022,

3. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I:104, 109.
<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0247%3ABook%3D1>
4. H.G.M. Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ezra—Nehemiah*. Eds. David A Hubbard and Glen W. Barker. 52 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1985. XVI: xxiii. See also Harrington, 2.
5. This chart is further expanded in Harrington, 70-71. Only a portion of the chart is shown here.
6. Martin Schmidt, *Prophet und Tempel: eine Studie zum Problem der Gottesnähe im Alten Testament*. Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948.
7. F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, 17.
8. See Harrington's excellent summary and discussion, 72-80.
9. Martin Jaffee, *Dynamics of Texts and Traditions*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997, 62.
10. David J. Shepherd and Christopher J.H. Wright, *Ezra and Nehemiah*. *The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018, 9.
11. John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*. 3 Volumes. Volume 1: *Israel's Gospel*. Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2003. I:36-37.
12. Williamson, xxiv.
13. Geert W. Lorein, *Ezra and Nehemiah*. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*. Eds. David G. Firth and Tremper Longman III. Downers Grove, IVP Academic. XII:53.
14. Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Joy of the Lord, the Strength of His People." *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. 63 Volumes. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1973. XVI:709. Sermon #1,027, preached Sunday morning, December 31, 1871, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London.

* All to Jesus I Surrender-Trinity Hymnal No. 562

1. All to Je-sus I surren-der, all to him I free-ly give; may I ev - er
2. All to Je-sus I surren-der, hum-bly at his feet I bow, world-ly pleasures
3. All to Je-sus I surren-der, make me, Sav-ior, wholly thine: may thy Ho - ly
4. All to Je-sus I surren-der, Lord, I give my - self to thee; fill me with thy

love and trust him, in his pres-ence dai - ly live.
all for - sak - en, take me, Je - sus, take me now. I sur-ren-der all,
Spir - it fill me, may I know thy pow'r di-vine.
love and pow - er, let thy bless-ing fall on me.

I sur-ren-der all. All to thee, my bless-ed Sav-ior, I sur-ren-der all.

REFRAIN

Trinity Hymnal No. 562
TEXT: Judson W. VanDeVenter, 1896; Alt. 1990
TUNE (SURRENDER): Winfield S. Weedon, 1896
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* Sending

* Benediction | I Corinthians 12:12, 13, 27

Leader: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

* Postlude

If you haven't picked up your Poinsettias yet, you can find them in the Tomlin Hall Lobby.

Serving This Morning:

Updates, Liturgist and Pastoral Prayer: Keith Boland

Readers: Tonya Fink and Theron Drayton

Musicians: Barb Howell, Ruth Ellen Lorick, and Josiah Rogers

Audio/visual and livestream: Chris Hollis, Jason Waters, and Vitaliy Petrenko

Faith Promise Giving:

LPC fiscal budget year is July 1st to June 30th.

Through the end of November 2024:

General Fund transfer to missions	\$54,165
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Transfer from 2023/2024 surplus*	\$44,702
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Faith Promise Giving:	\$36,445
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Missions Disbursements	\$76,283
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* The Elders and Deacons transferred one-half of last year's operating surplus to missions.

Stewardship

Through the end of November, 2024:

Budget FYTD	\$508,864
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Received FYTD	\$461,909
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Expenditures FYTD	\$420,256
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Updates

Midweek Reset Small Group | Wednesday 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

LPC has a Midweek Reset Small group that meets every Wednesday in the Parlor each time church meal is served at 5:30 p.m.

Our new study is the video series “**Unoffendable**” by **Brant Hansen**.

“As it turns out, giving up our right to be offended is one of the most freeing, healthy, relaxing, refreshing, stress-relieving, and encouraging things we can do. It allows us to recognize that people are broken and stop being scandalized by their actions. It enables us to accept people and stop judging them. It creates a way for us to not just love others but to actually like them.”

Please join us each week as we discuss each of the six 18 minute videos.

New Women 2 Women Bible study | January 22

Women’s Ministry would like to invite all ladies to the upcoming Women 2 Women Bible study on Wednesday nights starting **January 22nd**. The study will be in 1st and 2nd Peter. Come have a meal at 5:30 p.m., then join the sisters at 6:15 p.m. in room 204.

NOTES:

NOTES:

May the GOD of *Hope*
 fill you with all *Joy*
 and *Peace* as you trust
 in HIM, so that you
 may overflow with
Hope by the Power
 of the HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 15:13 NIV

INQUIRERS CLASS

LEARN MORE ABOUT LPC'S
 MISSION AND HOW YOU CAN BE
 PART OF OUR COMMUNITY!
 STARTING JANUARY 19TH
 DURING CE HOUR | 5 WEEKS



Register Here



Footsteps of Paul and John, 7 Churches of Revelation Tour

Informational Meetings
 Jan 12 | after 11:00 service | Parlor
 Jan 15 | 6:15pm | Pastor's Office



MODGNIK 2025 * HIGH SCHOOL



MODGNIK 2025 * HIGH SCHOOL



REGISTER HERE

The Pastor Search Committee
 is taking recommendations for
 Senior Pastor

Please, fill out a form and place in the box at the back of the sanctuary



Women's Winter Event
 Save the date! | Saturday, February 8th | 11:00am
 Here's a hint of what you might expect...

cooking
 classes



LPC Women's Ministry



LEXINGTON
 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Director of Music and Worship

lexpreschurch.com/jobs

Connect Card

Thanks for joining us today.
We would love to come alongside you in your walk with Jesus, whether you're new to our community or you've been here a while.

Visit lexpreschurch.com/connect or scan the QR code to fill out our Connect Card!

If you're not familiar with QR codes, we're here to help!

1. Open your smartphone's camera and point it at the QR code so that it shows clearly on your screen.
2. Wait for the camera to recognize and scan the QR code.
3. Click the link banner or notification when it pops up on your screen. Our Connect Card will automatically load in your browser.



Women's Ministry website and Facebook group:

<https://lexpreschurch.com/womens-ministry/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LPCWomen>

Youth Ministry Newsletter Subscription

Please, scan this QR Code with your phone camera.



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