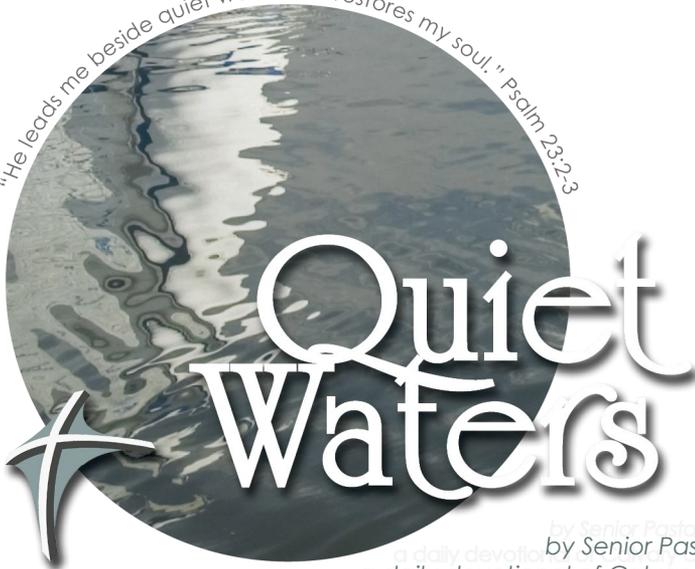


September 26—October 1, 2022

"He leads me beside quiet waters. he restores my soul." Psalm 23:2-3



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka  
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, September 26, 2022

**Destroyed**

**2 Chronicles 36**

*He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD'S temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.*  
2 Chronicles 36:18-19

The account of the Chronicler comes to an end. The glory of God has departed from the temple (Ezekiel 10) and so the temple is just a building to be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar has not destroyed God—or even the dwelling place of God. Without the protective presence of God, Jerusalem is exposed and totally destroyed. The promise God made when Solomon dedicated the temple was conditional upon the hearts of the people of Israel. God's patience was exhausted and so the temple lies in ruins. I must remember that this account comes after the building of the second temple and the rebuilding of the walls. This account is given by the Chronicler as a reminder that God alone is worthy of praise. In fact, first and second Chronicles are a guide for the postexilic nation, reminding them how to view the God of David and how to worship Him in the temple. The reminder is also a warning, lest the temple come to ruin again. The returning exiles have an opportunity to follow the commands of God and again have pure worship of the LORD taking place in the temple He has allowed to be rebuilt.

*Dear God, take and hold your rightful place on the throne of my life. May I always be mindful that I am a temple of your presence and your grace. May I never defame you in anything that I do or anything that I am. Amen.*

Tuesday, September 27, 2022

**Moved**

**Ezra 1**

*Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.*  
Ezra 1:5

It is time for the remnant to return to Israel. God had prophesied through Jeremiah that there would be exile and there would be a return after 70 years (Jeremiah 25:1-12, 29:10). It is time for the temple to be rebuilt. It is time for the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt. God has moved in the heart of Cyrus, just as he had promised (Isaiah 44:28-45:1). Now, he would move in the hearts of some of the people in exile to return to rebuild. Some will go back, and some will remain in the lands to which they had been exiled. Notice that it is God who moved in the hearts of those who will return. I must remember that it is God who moves hearts toward him and his purposes. I can seek to make my heart pliable to him—ready for him to move. The more I do that, the more likely it is that my heart will be moved by him. My heart becomes ready to be moved—eager for the Lord to move it. I am ready to help him build his kingdom—on earth as it is in heaven! God had a plan for those who remained as well. Esther reveals that truth. God is sovereign over all history. That which has been written and that which has yet to be lived. I must ever be ready for him to move in and through me so that he can accomplish his plans in my life without resistance and with great readiness!

*Dear Lord, take hold of my heart, and shape it and mold it as you will so that I can be ready to respond to your promptings in me. Amen.*

## Wednesday, September 28, 2022

### Sang

### Ezra 2–3

*With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: “He is good; his love to Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.* Ezra 3:11

I love reading about all the ways singing is involved in the worship of God by Israel. This verse harkens back to the praise of David in 1 Chronicles 16. It is a phrase that finds its way into so many places in Scripture. The Lord is good and His love endures forever. Genuine praise and thanksgiving of Almighty God seems to express itself in song. It is on the lips of infants that God has ordained praise (Psalm 8:2). It has been said that praise opens the door for God to rule. The exiles have come back and face a daunting task. They are to rebuild the temple. They have made it a priority to rebuild the altar and begin again the sacrifices to the Lord in accordance with the Law. And now, they have laid the foundation of the temple. What emotions flooded their hearts? I imagine being one of those who was willing to take on this assignment from God. I imagine standing up and saying, “Yes! I will go and rebuild the temple so that we can once again worship God on His holy mountain!” These people have packed up and come to a broken down city to begin to rebuild the city of God. They are thankful for the assignment, but more thankful for their God, who is faithful and whose love never fails. They break out in the timeless song.

*Dear Lord, help me live my life with a song on my lips—a song of praise for my Redeemer, who is good and whose love endures forever! Amen.*

## Thursday, September 29, 2022

### Willing

### Ezra 4–5

*But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”* Ezra 4:3

The work that has been given to the exiles is important work and it has been entrusted to them. When it begins to look successful, some of the enemies of Judah and Benjamin come sniffing around to see if they can get in on the process. They claim to be worshipers of God who have great interest in getting the temple rebuilt. But it is clear these are not followers of the God of Jerusalem. They can have no part in this important work, and Zerubbabel and Jeshua make that very clear. Immediately, this brings oppression from the very ones who said they were allies. They set out to frustrate the plans and discourage the people who are working on the temple. They hired people to make sure the discouragement took hold. It caused the people to become afraid, and the work stopped. It was very important that these imposters not be allowed to pollute the work of the LORD, even if it meant a delay.

*Dear God, How I long to be about your work without distractions, and yet it seems so many times that I allow myself to be paralyzed by fear from voices outside of your will. Please give me boldness to stay focused on the call you have on my life. Let me serve you with reckless abandon! Amen.*

Friday, September 30, 2022

## Hand of the Lord

Ezra 6–7

*Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.*  
Ezra 7:27-28

It is amazing to read the decrees of the kings—Cyrus, Darius, and finally, Artaxerxes. God had clearly stirred in their hearts. From their vantage point, they knew there was a God that was not being appeased. It was the God of Jerusalem. Their desire was to make sure that there was not any god that may not be finding favor with them. But God used their selfish desire for His purpose. When I read Ezra 7 and the letter that Ezra received, I can see why Ezra would have had great boldness to go ahead with what he had been called to do—the very thing he had been trained to do. He could have boldness because of the absolute certainty he had that the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. This call to return to Jerusalem followed many years of prayer, seeking the LORD's favor and pleading for Him to reveal his hand to his nation. Our God is faithful and remembers his children. I must learn to seek the hand of the LORD in my life. I must long for his presence and learn how to linger there. Then I, like Ezra, can take courage and go on to that which he has called me to do with great boldness.

*Dear God, lay your hand upon me. Fill me with your presence that I may have boldness to go forward in the call you have placed on my life! Amen.*

Saturday, October 1, 2022

## Ashamed

Ezra 8–9

*"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens... O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence."*  
Ezra 9:6,15

Ezra knows that the hand of the LORD has made it possible for a remnant to return to Jerusalem as a representation of all Israel. God is moving in a powerful way, changing the hearts of kings and drawing His nation back to himself. Ezra is a key to this return. He has sought to live his life devoted to the LORD, but in this prayer, we see his understanding of the holiness of the God he loves. While those around him seem to be oblivious to the sin they have in their lives, it grieves Ezra to the point of shame. In his prayer, he does not accuse the others, but joins with them in solidarity in the shame and disgrace of their behavior. He is grieved over the sin of the nation and claims that sin as his own. This reminds me of Isaiah before the throne of God (Isaiah 6:5). Ezra knows that he is not faultless, and his understanding of sin allowed him to grieve not only for the sins of a nation, but his own sins as well. I learn from this that I am all too cavalier about my sin and the sins of the people of God. Oh, that my sin would grieve me to the point of earnest repentance that would lead to the forgiveness of God.

*Dear God, when I consider the depth of my sin and pride, I fall ashamed before you, knowing I have no righteousness of my own, throwing myself at your feet, seeking mercy. Thank you that you forgive my sin and the sins of your people. Amen.*