

# Third Sunday after Easter

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, we come before you as your people together to hear your word. Lord, this is a very ancient story, over 2,500 years old.

And yet, you are the same God that is in our midst this morning. So Lord, we ask that you would teach us by your word, that you would open our eyes and open our hearts.

And Lord, may only the truth be spoken and only the truth be heard. We pray in Christ's mighty name. Amen. Amen. If you have a Bible, we'll be in Ezra chapter 7, a little bit in chapter 8 this morning.

If you were here last week, you would know that we were in chapter 3. So we are skipping portions of the text. We'll have one more week next week at Ezra, and then we'll get into Nehemiah.

A bit of a reminder that Ezra, Nehemiah, originally were one book. So that's why we're combining both. And in a real way, we get the full story with the reading of both.

[ 1 : 0 6 ]     But before we get into a bit of a recap of the section that we're skipping over, I'll just say a couple words here. What does it mean to be a blessed person? What does it mean to be a person who knows divine favor, or just any favor, that is, to enjoy a bit of a good life?

I mean, it's a bit old now, but hashtag blessed was a thing for a while there. I think my mom even made an arts and crafts thing that she wanted it to feature fairly prominently in our house.

I'm not sure where it is right now. But anyways, it was like a thing, hashtag blessed. But what does it mean to be blessed?

What does it mean to enjoy favor? It's a really important question to answer. Not just for the Christian, but for all people.

Because I put forward to you that to be blessed, to enjoy favor, the richness of whatever situation you are in, is something that we all long for and we all desire.

[ 2 : 1 6 ]     In chapters 7 and 8, this comes up quite a bit in the text. It doesn't necessarily say blessed, or it doesn't necessarily talk about favor, although, like, explicitly.

But in chapters 7 and 8 of Ezra, we'll read at least six times where it will say, the hand of the Lord. And the hand of the Lord is upon this person, or was upon me, or whatever it may be.

But the hand of the Lord features very prominently in our section. And our attention is drawn to the phrase for a reason, and it has great significance. And I think, put forward again to you, that it will help us to understand what it means to live a blessed life, to, in a sense, have the hand of the Lord upon us.

So what is the hand of the Lord? Is it just for Ezra? I mean, Ezra, the hand of the Lord is upon Ezra. It's unmistakable in these two chapters. The hand of the Lord, the hand of the Lord is upon Ezra.

Is it just for him? If not, how can we acquire it? So, we'll jump into that. But first, I've got to catch you guys up on the narrative. We skipped over a number of chapters.

- [ 3 : 25 ] It's very helpful to contextualize where we're at in the story. So we stopped in chapter 4, verse 6. And it goes all the way to 6.22, that we've skipped over that section.
- And in that section, Israel's enemies look to hinder the work of God in terms of building the temple. And they're very successful. 20 years go by. A hammer is not lifted.
- A block is not placed upon another. The temple rebuild. There was a big pause put on it. Chapters 5 and 6, the work continues.
- Very interestingly. Even though there are challenges and attempts to thwart the plan. Especially calling into question the legitimacy of God's people and their task at hand.
- So, the work is finally completed in chapter 6. It's a remarkable section. There is a dedication and much celebration. And immediately after the narrative, the Passover is celebrated.
- [ 4 : 29 ] I won't get into the Passover. We mention it, I mean, somewhat fairly regularly because it features so heavily in the Bible. But it's significant in the celebration of the temple because the Passover represents God's deliverance from the hand of slavery.
- And it really marks the beginning of the people of God becoming their own nation. And to celebrate the Passover is, in a sense, celebrating that God is restoring them back into the land.
- So, at the end of chapter 6, that is what we see. And it really, in a sense, marks the part 1 of three parts of Ezra and Nehemiah. And part 1, part 2, part 3, they're each marked with a significant figure.
- So, part 1, it's this character called Zerubbabel. And we haven't really talked about him a whole ton. But his task was primarily to rebuild the temple. Now, that section is finished.
- And chapter 7, in walks Ezra. Now, it's interesting that Ezra walks in well over half of the way through the book.
- [ 5 : 38 ] But Ezra here is the next key figure. And if Zerubbabel came in to rebuild the temple, Ezra came to reestablish God's law in the land.
- And we'll talk about what I mean by God's law. But Ezra, he is a scribe. He is a Bible teacher. He is very concerned that the nation of Israel follow God's ways.
- And if you remember last week, or if you've read in 1 and 2 Chronicles, it is precisely the departure from God's word that gets Israel into the mess they're in.
- So, Ezra, he's a key figure in all of this. Sure, they rebuilt the temple. Things are great. But the temple means nothing without God's word. So, that's where we are.
- And here is where we are going to pick up the narrative. Ezra, like I mentioned, is chiefly concerned with restoring the law to Israel, but specifically to restore Israel to right relationship with God, according to the Holy Scriptures.
- [ 6 : 44 ] Ezra, right off the bat, in verses 1 to 6, his pedigree is laid out. But Brad, I mean, noble attempt at reading the list of names are very difficult.
- What you really need to know with the list of names, I mean, we could, not to say that they don't matter, but the big key in all of this is that last name. He's a son of Aaron, the chief priest.
- The chief priest. Now, Aaron was the one whom all the priests came from. He was the brother of Moses, and Aaron, as the chief priest, was supposed to help the people follow the Lord according to God's word.
- If you remember, he did not do that very well. Moses is up on Mount Sinai getting the law from God. It's this huge, momentous occasion in the nation's history.
- Getting the law isn't just God's do's and don'ts. It is establishing Israel as a nation. Before they were sojourners and slaves in Egypt, but now they're their own nation.

- [ 7 : 53 ] And Moses comes down, and what does he see? The people are impatient. And Aaron, on their behalf, crafts for them an idol. And yet, he is a priest that is still God's servant.
- Huge, huge blunder. Ezra here is going to try to, in a sense, be the anti-Aaron in that case. He's going to cling fast to God's word.
- And his chief concern is being used by God to, like I mentioned, to not just bring the law back to them, but to re-establish the nation.
- Because the nation of Israel is established by God's word. So it's a key aspect in all of this. So, that's a bit of a background of where we're coming from, who Ezra is.
- Now, let's jump into the text. I'm hoping to draw three main things out of our text for this morning. We're going to look at, really, scripture. What is God's word?
- [ 8 : 58 ] Why is this so deeply connected, God's word and scripture? Why is it so deeply connected to God's favor as well? So keep all that in the back of your head.
- We're going to look at three things. First, the nature of scripture. What is scripture? The second thing is, after the nature of scripture, is the student of scripture.
- How does one engage with God's word? And then the last one we'll take a look at is the joy of walking according to God's word, according to holy scripture.
- So, what is scripture? How do we study it? And we're going to take a look at the joy that comes with it. Very simple, very profound. Let's jump right in.
- Okay, the nature of scripture. I'm drawing a lot of this point out. In fact, almost the entire point out from the first half of verse 6. So, look with me. Verse 6 of chapter 7.
- [ 9 : 55 ] This Ezra, talking about the descendant of Aaron, the chief priest, went up from Babylonia. That means he is on his way to Jerusalem from Babylon.
- And this Ezra was a scribe, skilled in the law of Moses, that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. And I'll pause right there. Seems like an interesting line.
- Something we could quickly gloss over. And yet, it is packed with, in a sense, not an exhaustive understanding of scripture, but a very deep understanding of scripture.
- And like I mentioned about talking a bit about the law, the law of God isn't just the do's and don'ts. Although there are many do's and don'ts. There is, within the law of God, lots of laws.
- But the word law that we read is a translation of Torah in Hebrew, which is maybe a better way to say it is like the ways of God.
- [ 10 : 59 ] But even that doesn't quite articulate the fullness of what Torah means. Because God's law, the first five books of the Old Testament, starting in Genesis and ending in Deuteronomy, it's more than just about God's ways.
- But it's the story of God, the creator God, and how he makes a covenant and promises with the people. Really, if we're going to talk about the Torah, we need to talk about the story of God, and how he has created everything, and how he has connected a people together for his own namesake.
- In reality, it's a story of God interacting with human beings. That is what the law is. And when it talks about the law of Moses, it is talking about this Torah, this law, this way of God, this story of who God is and what he has done.
- So it's very important that we understand that when we talk about God's law, it's not just don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't lie.
- It is an insight into who this God is and how he has invited us to partake in him. And Ezra would have known all of this. Why? He was skilled in the law of Moses.

[ 12 : 21 ] Which means that first and foremost, he knows God and how God has made the world and how God wants the world to exist. He is, in a sense, a practitioner of life, according to God's rules and God's commands and God's, most importantly, his heart.

He would know that God makes covenants and promises that he will not break. He knows that God has created all things and has deemed it good. He would know, Ezra would know, that all of life was to be designed to be enjoyed.

Except that, and that he would also know that this enjoyment is always threatened because of sin and evil. This is what Ezra would know. So when it says that he is skilled in the law of Moses, think, Ezra, he knows God.

And it would seem that God would know him. What else do we see from this sentence? Well, we also see that Scripture is never a private matter. It is always given to the Lord's people for their great benefit.

We see this here. We see, I'll just read the whole verse, the first section. Ezra was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given.

[ 13 : 42 ] I've referenced it already that God gave the law to Moses, but he gave it in the sight of the entire assembly of Israel.

So that when Moses was up by himself, okay, on the mountain, God descended upon the mountain, and what the people saw would be supernatural and unmistakable. There would be lightning and thunder, and it would be a very frightening, scary sight.

And in a sense, God, by doing so, revealed to everybody that he truly was there, and that the law that was given was for them, for all of them together. Father, Holy Scripture is always for the community, because Holy Scripture builds the community and makes the community out of individuals or groups or families that might have things in common, oftentimes do not, but God's Word always makes a people for himself.

And this is what is happening at Mount Sinai, and this is what is referred to here, that the God of Israel had given the law of Moses to the people of God.

So, this is where kind of the rubber hits the road, because we don't live in a Christian nation. We don't. We live in a pluralistic nation of many different religions or no religion.

[ 15 : 06 ] I would put forward that there really isn't a no religion. We are religious people. But people that claim to be atheists or whatever their faith is. Two examples.

Mormonism. And there's a church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints just down the road on Old Richmond here, and a mosque even farther down in Bell's Corners.

But those two faiths, as an example, they have built everything on private revelation, that God has given his Word to a specific person without witnesses, without people seeing what has happened.

And then from that person, they become a prophet, and they share, and the religion grows and grows and grows and grows. That's not what happens with Holy Scripture.

God gives, He reveals Himself in the midst of a congregation. That's very important, because it doesn't matter what I think, it doesn't matter what Joseph Smith thought, or Muhammad thought.

[ 16 : 17 ] What is God saying? That's the big thing. Throughout Scripture, God is revealing Himself constantly, not just to individuals, although that definitely does happen, but always to groups, always to the nation, always to the masses.

And even when He reveals Himself to a prophet, it's either calling people back to God's law, God's ways, faithfulness to God, or warning them about what is going to happen because of their departure from God's Word.

So important is it that people don't make things up in Scripture that the prophet who gets God's Word wrong is liable to death.

So it's kind of a big thing that God reveals Himself and that He desires us to take that very seriously. So in the New Testament, also we see the risen Lord.

He doesn't appear to one or to a couple, but by the time Jesus ascends, He will have appeared to multitudes, hundreds of people. And again, this is in keeping with God's ways of how He reveals Himself and His Word for the sake of the entire community.

[ 17 : 38 ] The Scriptures are always for the community because the Scriptures form the community itself. And this is why we read so much Scripture on Sunday mornings and why it really, truly doesn't matter if I crack a joke or not or if I have an opinion about something or not or whatever it may be.

What is God saying in His Word? And I'm not saying I nail it every week or that everybody is always speaking God's Word in every corner of this church before the service, during or after.

But this is our goal because it is God's Word that forms and sustains our community. This is what we are reminded of week after week. God's community is always formed by God's Word.

So immediately after this, we see, interestingly, the first reference to this hand of God, this connection between God's Word and God's favor. Look with me at the second part of verse 6 of chapter 7.

Why don't I read the full verse here? This Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. And the king granted him, that's the Persian king, all that he asked, why?

[ 18 : 57 ] For the hand of the Lord his God was on him. The connection between Ezra's skills in Scripture, his reverence for Scripture, his knowledge of what Scripture is, is directly connected to the hand of the Lord being upon him.

It really is unmistakable. And this leads nicely to our second point. If Ezra is skilled in Scripture, and this results in the hand of the Lord being on him, how do we become students of Scripture?

How do we approach Scripture? How do we read Scripture? What are we to do? Look with me to verse 10 here. For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

The first thing to notice is that Ezra, he has a great desire to know the Word of God. He desires to know it for himself.

His heart is inclined to study what God has revealed. It wasn't merely a job for him as a scribe, but a privilege.

[ 20 : 16 ] He knew the value of Scripture, for in Scripture, like we mentioned, he would meet the Lord. So the studying of Scripture isn't an easy task. It's not. It requires diligence and effort.

It involves patience. That's a hard thing. A very impatient culture we live in.

Your pastor is an impatient man, oftentimes. It also requires meditation, to chew and to think through and to dwell upon, to have a focus to it.

There's also a huge temptation in studying God's Word, to think of oneself as superior to others that might not know how much you know. And that's a huge danger.

It is a fine line, in a sense, of being a minister. I'll speak to myself, but I share this stuff because who knows if God will raise up somebody else from our congregation to lead another church one day.

[ 21 : 26 ] Who knows? But it is a fine line to walk, to know God, and to immerse yourself in Scripture, and to not be puffed up, to not think of yourself as more worthy.

The great irony in this is that Scripture, if read properly, if engaged with properly, if knowing that Scripture is about God, and it is a gift from Him, it should result in the more we know, the humbler we become.

Because who are we before Almighty God? Who are we? And yet, the human mind and the human heart, they can be terribly deceptive things. Thinking, in a sense, I know a lot about God, and all of a sudden, we kind of make ourselves to be like God.

Not in terms of His holiness, but in His stature. A terrible thing. Jesus encountered this all the time in the New Testament. The people that knew the most seemed to have cared the least.

There's a great temptation there. But Ezra here, it's very clear, and we'll see a bit later on, that as he engages in his study of Scripture, man, this guy, he is humble.

[ 22 : 47 ] And he recognizes his great need for God. All the time, it seems. Later on, he's maybe not so humble. He's a human being.

But here, as he engages in Scripture, he is very, he's very humble. And that is a good sign for somebody who studies God's Word.

And it's not just for ministers, but for you and I, as we dig into Scripture, as we come to church, and we're reading it, and we're pondering it, when we wake up, if you do the daily offices, or if you have your own Bible reading plan, your own devotions in the morning, or in the evening, or both, this is for all of us.

So a sign of a Bible scholar, and a student of God's Word, will always be humility. It will always be humility. For to truly know God's Word is to truly know how unworthy we are to even know Him, let alone to have the privilege of being called a son and daughter.

It is a humbling thing. And humility isn't to be humiliated. Right? To have that humility is to be in the most sure spot to be in relationship with God and to know who we are.

[ 24 : 02 ] But more importantly, to know who He is. That is why it is really important. The second bit that we can see here is as we study Scripture, we can't really study Scripture and know Scripture apart from knowing God.

One story, another personal story, I did, in a weird roundabout way, I ended up doing my undergrad in religious studies at Carleton, and I came across a professor for a number of classes, Zeba Crook, if anybody has been in Ottawa for a while or has taken some classes, and he was the head of the biblical criticism kind of section in Carleton's religious studies department.

And this man was immersed in Scripture, like day in and day out. He could read Greek better than the Greeks. Like, he was an incredible mind, a brilliant guy.

But in the end, because, you know, his words, he was an atheist, he did not believe in God, the conclusions he came to were not life-giving, but instead, in a big way, I mean, eroded the foundation of the faith of so many, you know, 19 to 21-year-olds that don't know, you know, up from down.

I mean, God love undergrad students, okay? It's not a time to come to learn and be built up, but in a sense, it is a time of, it's like, if you have students in your life, pray for them.

[ 25 : 35 ] It's a tough time. to know the scriptures is to know God, and you can't divorce the two. You can't, this isn't a textbook that we can read as if it's history.

It is a story that God is engaging with people, and we get to be a part of it. It's an invitation into this wonderful story. So, it's a huge aspect of all of this.

Look with me again to verse 10. Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord, but then, what does it say next? But to also do it. That to be a student of God's word means hypocrisy.

It really needs to be very far from God's people. And this is something the church struggles with. There's a lot of own goals in the church where we're hypocrites. We don't practice what we preach.

And I mean, you could think through things in your own life where you've been a hypocrite. We've all been hypocrites. But God's word commands us to respond as we study God's word. It is not in a lab like I alluded to that we study God's word and we can just do whatever we want afterwards.

[ 26 : 47 ] We ask the question, how shall I then live? Ezra here was careful to not just study God's word, but to do it.

And then the third thing is to teach it. Now, I'm not saying if you study God's word, if you engage in scripture, like next Sunday, you're up. I'm not saying that.

But without a doubt, if you're a parent, you have a responsibility to teach your children. Not perfectly, okay? I'm not, not perfectly, but you have a, you have a responsibility to teach, to, to pass on the knowledge.

Because again, we're talking not about a sterile history, but about God, a person that, that is deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply involved in every aspect of your life, whether you know it or not.

You, you get excited. It's a relationship. It's a, it's a connection. It's a, degrees of thankfulness and intrigue and you want to share it. I mean, so there's an aspect of teaching it to, to, to share with people what you've learned, but to also bear witness to others about who this God is.

[ 27 : 58 ] So whether it's a Christian or not, we, as we engage in God's word, we have to teach it in a sense. So maybe a teach kind of freaks you out.

Okay, think of it like sharing. Maybe that would be a better way. So, there's a study aspect to it. There is a doing aspect to it and then there's a teaching, sharing aspect to God's word.

So, again, where does God's hand come in to play here? Look with me. Up one verse to verse nine.

For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem. I mean, just verse nine there, Ezra is going from Babylon to Jerusalem.

It's a thousand, something like a thousand miles. They gloss over it in one verse, okay? There it is. Continuing on. So, he's going up from Babylonia and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem for the good hand of his God was on him.

[ 29 : 11 ] There we see it again and the proximity to Ezra and in scripture it again is unmistakable. As God blesses his name and blesses his word so too will he bless the right and humble handling of scripture.

So, yet again we see that the hand of God is connected to scripture and the right handling and humble handling of God's word. And this takes us to the third section.

Look with me verse 27 and 28 of chapter 7. So, if we know what scripture is, if it's very clear on how we are to engage with scripture, what is the result of scripture?

If you remember back in chapter 3 last week, the people, a part of a real genuine faith was a joyful faith.

We saw that at the end of chapter 3 and we see that same joy as a result of knowing God's word and walking in God's ways here. So, look with me at verse 27 and 28.

[ 30 : 23 ] Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

Background, again, Ezra has found favor with the king to go back to Jerusalem. The king is going to help him get there. He's going to make sure that everything he needs he has and this is all why?

Because God has put it onto the heart of the king. So, let's start again in verse 27. Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

Verse 28, And who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage for the hand of the Lord my God was on me and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

The right handling of scripture, the humble handling of scripture will always result in right theology and that will always result in doxology.

[ 31 : 31 ] Put another way, as we engage in God's word and we know his will and know who he is and who we are in light of that, the result will be praise.

It will be. It will be joy as it pertains to our culture. We're not going to jump and dance likely, but we will have joy and we will express it in our own way.

In this section, Ezra praises God for showing him favor before the king and notice once again the latter part of verse 28. What does it say? The hand of the Lord was upon him.

So we praise God for what he has done. Ezra has put his mind to the Lord and God's word. His heart is to reestablish the reading and proclamation of God's word among his people.

He is diligent to study it, to do it, to teach it. And what is happening? God is blessing him because the hand of the Lord is upon him. There is that connection once again with God's word and God's favor.

[ 32 : 36 ] So we praise God. We can gather from this. We can praise God for what he has done, how he is sustaining us in the here and now, but also what he is going to do. But more important than all that, we praise God for who he is because he has made promises that he has kept.

That he has expressed steadfast love to us when we do not deserve it. He has extended mercy to us when we should have received judgment. We praise God for who he is and what he has done.

And this is where I'll just talk about the hand of the Lord in a bit more detail because I worry that as we've gone through this section, what we've heard is that as we study the Bible, God's hand will be on us and we will have wonderful, happy lives.

God's hand but the fact is in this situation, okay, in this situation, I mean, Ezra's going to have some tough things ahead of him but he is experiencing a lot of favor.

but what happens when we are diligent in knowing God's word and gathering with God's people and genuinely seeking his face and seeking him for who he is and not just what he does and we are engaging in God's word and studying it and wrestling with it and pondering it and praying it and meditating upon it and being really by God's strength and his help, you know, not being hypocrites and doing what it commands us to do and trying our best to share it and life goes south because that happens.

[ 34 : 21 ] So, what on earth are we to gather from something like this? Is this just a, you know, do A, add B and you're going to get C.

I think what's a better way to understand this hand of the Lord is that as we seek God's face to do God's will, that's the key aspect in this.

God will show us favor just because we know him and what he has done and we would know right relationship with him. That the key aspect in all of this is really what is God's will.



In this case, rebuild the temple, reestablish the law. We'll see in Nehemiah, rebuild the walls in the city. But for Jesus, he was a perfect law keeper.

He had perfect favor from God. He knew the scriptures because he was the word of God himself. God's hand was clearly on Jesus and yet it was God's will not that he would find favor with Herod or the Sanhedrin or the temple priests or Pilate or the soldiers but that he would die.

[ 35 : 42 ] That was God's will for his life. He had perfect favor but God's will wasn't that he would be living the hashtag blessed life but that he would die.

And this is where we can reconcile these two things. How can we on one hand know that the hand of the Lord is upon us and yet struggle through life with very real lows and really long valleys.

How do we reconcile that? We look to Christ. On the cross Jesus dies on our behalf according to God's will. He suffers before that in a gruesome way and in the end he is forsaken by his father so that the result that we could be blessed.

Whether or not we experience incredible blessings in this life or not but that we will know blessings for eternity that we will have the hand of the Lord upon us forever in fact to be in his very presence.

this is this is the real blessed life. So for you and I as we engage in God's word and we look to him for our salvation and we we we trust that he will bless us in the ways we need to be blessed in this life that ultimately the blessing is already given that we know that we will be with him for eternity that Christ's own favor perfect favor of God that God's own hand rests upon us that was resting upon Christ.

[ 37 : 28 ] Jesus does God's will perfectly and we'll see later on that that God's will is really again like I said that's that's the real bit in all of this.

Ezra in chapter 8 this was a part of the section of the reading but I focused on chapter 7 in chapter 8 Ezra he declines an armored guard to go with him from Babylonia from Babylon back to Jerusalem.

He has women he has children he has a ton of gold all the temple utensils and gold and silver I mean he was a sitting duck 900 to 1000 miles 4 plus months it's something like 10 miles a day in the desert and in the wilderness and he says I'm actually not going to take the armored guard because if God's hand is on me then it's it's on me all the way okay very noble thing and God delivers them it's a fantastic thing in Nehemiah it's a similar situation and Nehemiah's like yeah give me that guard yeah I want that guard I need that guard to go with me and somehow that was also God's will so it's not simply that we can always take from scripture this carbon copy of what to do sometimes scripture prescribes what we are to do other times it just describes what's happening here but the principle behind it is this what is God's will what is it he has laid it open in holy scripture and there's a lot of aspects to God's will but the meat and potatoes of God's will is that he desires us to be with him and he has made a way in Christ Jesus so friends let us know the hand of the Lord being upon us let us know the favor of God whatever comes this week okay good or bad whatever comes this week let us know that the favor of the Lord is upon us the favor of the Lord and that we will live the blessed life for eternity let's pray

Father in heaven we thank you that we have these fantastic examples of how your people engaged with you and your word throughout the generations Lord we thank you for Ezra we thank you for his faith we thank you for his diligence for his heart to reestablish the your word amongst your people Lord may your word never depart from us help us to be students of it in such a life of distractions and options where finding a quiet 10 minutes here or 20 minutes there seems like an impossibility Lord help us help us to help ourselves Lord give us the strength we need to do the things you called us to do but Lord more than anything else open our eyes to the reality of what your son has done on the cross of Calvary for us that the hand of favor for all those who have put their faith in him it rests upon us and Lord let us live in that reality we pray in Christ's mighty name

Amen in heaven