

The House of the Lord

Ezra 7:27

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD
 "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 which is in Jerusalem."
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I. There comes a time when we just have to celebrate. Life goes along on an even keel, or may even tip down a little, until one day we suddenly realize that we possess something valuable. We become almost overwhelmed and we want to shout.

A. Throughout the ages this has happened to men and has resulted in many great poems, in immortal music and in great art.

B. The other day I was sitting in my car
 "I wish they had one of those 14 sales
 "What's that?

"Why they have TVs and all sorts of things that you can buy for a cent. They know they are losing money but they just do it.... he got lost here and was groping. Then he got it and went on. They just do it to celebrate! All of his eagerness and enthusiasm went into the explanation. Perhaps he was making a profound observation that there comes a time in every persons life when he must celebrate.

C. Estard has his hero toss his purse away at a play. His companions chide him with a reminder that it was all he had and it was a very childish thing to do. He replies: Yes, but what a gesture!

D. The doxology is an important element in Christian worship and dates from early Jewish times. We think only of the so-called long meter doxology but actually there are many including the Telem, the marvelous Gloria in Excelsis at the close of the communion service and many other hymns and Psalms. In the book of Ezra in the Old Testament is found Ezra's doxology: "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 WHICH IS IN JERUSALEM."

II. The story

A. The Israelites had been in exile for many years
 B. From time to time some attempt had been made to resettle the homeland and to rebuild the temple.

C. The work of Nehemiah had made Judaea inhabitable and work had actually begun on the temple. This, however, had been stopped. Now some twenty years later, another group led by Ezra returned and finished the building. Ezra had the support of the king and he brought with him not only volunteers to work but money and other material resources.
 D. This doxology of Ezra represents this hymn of praise for the house of the Lord.
 E. As we start this week in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the rebuilding of our temple there are some things which we should remember and which are suggested by Ezra's experience."

II. First, you will notice that Ezra consider this a Divine movement. "Blessed be the Lord...who put such a thing in the heart of the king."

A. Often hear the expression: Where in the world did you get THAT idea? Ezra has no doubt where the idea came from. It came from God.

B. Some of us have shied away from the idea of Divine initiative only now to come back to it as a basic principle.

C. We affirm our belief in a God who can take the initiative with men and in his own way can speak to them.

"I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
 He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
 It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
 No, I was found of Thee."

D. Ezra was able to face and overcome many difficulties that might have defeated him because he believed that this was a Divine movement.

III. Second, there had to be response in the heart of the king and also in the heart of Ezra and all the people who went with him.

A. God strikes the spark but we fan it into flame

B. Isaiah went into the temple and beheld God high and lifted up. His experience would have vanished in a puff of sentiment had he not said: Here am I, send me."

Modern Christians answer, Here am I, send George!

B. Clifton Park choir. Woman saying, NO!
 Choir sings: If Jesus goes with me, I'll go anywhere!!

D. The Divine encounter demands the human response.

E. Just as in the day of Ezra—the king, Ezra, and the people must respond, so in the day this building was built people had to respond and if the church is to go on they must continue to respond.

IV. In the third place, beautifying the temple was only a part of Ezra's commission

A. Really, the most important contribution made by him was to carry up to Jerusalem a copy of the Torah, the sacred law.

B. He read this law to the people just as Sunday after Sunday words from the Book have been read from this pulpit.

C. This is all a part of our faith, the idea that the Divine has something to say to us. This is the thing we are trying and have been trying for year after year to say to the people who have entered these doors. We say it in the rich symbolism of this beautiful building, the choir and the organist say it through their music, the ministers say it in their prayers and through the reading of the Scripture and the preaching of the word. We proclaim it through the Sacraments, God has something to say to you. "Thus saith the Lord" was the prophet's word as the prophets tried to translate God's disciplines into daily action.

D. Let me read you a short paragraph: "THE CHURCH MAY WELL, AS ONE OF ITS ACTIVITIES, PROMOTE DISCUSSION OF CURRENT PROBLEMS, BUT NO CHURCH JUSTIFIES ITSELF SIMPLY BY BECOMING A FORUM. INDEED, I SHOULD GO FURTHER. ... I DO NOT THINK THAT THE CHURCH, AT ANY RATE THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, HAS ANY PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE FOR SOCIETY EXCEPT AS IT HAS SOMETHING FUNDAMENTAL TO SAY ABOUT THE UNIVERSE AND MAN'S RELATION TO IT. ... FOR THE MINISTER A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE AND SOME HUMANITARIAN ENTHUSIASM ARE NO SUBSTITUTES FOR A LIVING MESSAGE ABOUT A GOD IN WHOSE LOVE AND POWER HE FOUND NOT ONLY HIS OWN PEACE, OR HIS OWN ESCAPE OUT OF THE WORLD, BUT ALSO HIS DEEP/OP HOPE FOR THE VICTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND."

1. Who wrote that—a Bishop? no, that was written by Norman Thomas

2. Do not misunderstand me—I believe that the church and its minister must be concerned and involved in every good cause that deals with men, but we must do this basically because we are doing the will of God.

3. Story of Ahab and Jehoshaphat:
 "Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?"

E. This church was built not just for the sake of building a beautiful building. It was built as the house of the Lord. It was built as a place where people might come to discover what the Lord had to say to them.

V. In the fourth place, Ezra not only read the law—he TAUGHT it.

A. I think that you will discover that the teaching area of this building is at least as large, if not larger than the Sanctuary.

1. This is not surprising when we remember that Howard Hagman had such a large part in the planning of the building

2. I remember him as the Chairman of our Conference Board of Education fighting on the floor of the Conference for Christian Education

B. This morning we dedicated our church school workers and you have in your hands the list of names of the devoted people who have consecrated themselves to do the work in the Church School. It is not an easy task. 'et it is at this point that the church succeeds or fails.

C. Are you equipped to teach in the church school? You answer—I have no training

1. Well you just have the most marvelous opportunity to get some training starting tomorrow night in the Federation Leadership School which is being held right in this church.

2. When Mrs. Huntington or Mrs. McCormack or one of the ministers come to you and ask you to teach just remember this — God may be speaking to you just as he did to Ezra. You should remember that it is a very solemn moment when you say NO to God.

D. We must have more than a well equipped building
 1. In Harry Golden's best selling book, "Only In America" he writes: "A MAGNIFICENT BUILDING IS ALL RIGHT, BUT IT WILL NEVER PRODUCE EDUCATED MEN AND WOMEN. ONLY TEACHERS CAN DO THAT, AND THEY CAN DO IT (AND HAVE DONE IT) BY CANDLELIGHT IF NEED BE."

2. We need teachers!

VI. Well -- I guess Ezra has about got to Jerusalem and I have reached my fifthly. What did he find? He found a mess!

- A. As is so often the case we start out in a burst of enthusiasm only to discover that when we arrive all the glamor has gone.
- B. I have participated in the ordination of ministers. Contrast their faces when they rise from the altar and after their first official board meeting.
- C. You remember the story of the man from Macedonia?
1. Have you ever finished the story?
 2. Do you know what Paul found when he got to Macedonia? Was the man there. He was not!
 3. Luke writes in the Book of Acts: "AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO THE RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE SUPPOSED THERE WAS A PLACE OF PRAYER: AND WE SAT DOWN AND SPOKE TO THE WOMEN WHO HAD COME TOGETHER."
- D. Olin Stockwell: "A missionary from Africa said to him, 'The missionary job is 95% drudgery and 5% thrill.'
1. The house of the Lord is built to enable us to endure the drudgery and capture the thrill
 2. There is always reality to face

VII. As I look at these stones this morning I think of the endless hours of labor that entered into the building of this church. The planning, the convincing, the physical labor itself, the work of architects and engineers and craftsmen, the sacrificial giving during the years -- all of this is ours today. And I want to shout: "BLESSED BE THE LORD, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, WHO PUT SUCH A THING AS THIS INTO THE HEART OF (THE PEOPLE) TO BEAUTIFY THE HOUSE OF THE LORD."

- A. But do you know that the house of the Lord is a very fragile thing?
- B. Jesus came out of the temple one day and one of his disciples said to him, LOOK TEACHER, WHAT WONDERFUL STONES AND WHAT WONDERFUL BUILDINGS! And Jesus said to him, DO YOU SEE THESE GREAT BUILDINGS? THERE WILL NOT BE LEFT HERE ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER, THAT WILL NOT BE THROWN DOWN!
- C. Do you know what the most valuable thing is in this building? It is you, and you, and you. You can tear this building down. Last week last month, someone started to tear it down! He had not pick axe, no bomb -- he did it with one word. He said, NO: when he was asked to serve.

No, I have serve my turn! Save the mark. But even as that stone fell it was put back into place, fortunately by another who said, Here am I, send me. But that first person can never know the thrill of Ezra's doxology

VIII. In a moment now the lights will be dimmed except for the light that shines on the cross. It is an empty cross--there is no figure upon it because it is the symbol of the resurrection, the symbol of a risen and victorious Christ. It is not a crude or plain cross, because it is the symbol of the fact that Christ has transformed suffering into something that is lovely. As you pause in silence at the foot of this cross I ask you to commit yourself once again to the eternal Christ. Say in heart YES--Here am I Lord, send me.

CALL TO PRAYER:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

PRAYER:

Almighty God, who of thy great mercy hast gathered us into thy Church; grant that we may so honor thee, both in spirit and in outward form, that thy name may be glorified, and we may be true members of thy living fellowship. Give us, we pray Thee, a vision of thy glory, that we may bow our hearts before thee, and obtain that grace which thou hast promised to all.

We thank thee for the glory of sunrise and and sunset, for shelter and daily bread, for the opportunity to labor, for good neighbors and friends. We also give thee thanks for all of those joys in life that refresh us and for those afflictions that bring us new insights and better understanding. We recognize our heavenly Father, that thou hast sought us long before we sought thee. We acknowledge that we have neglected those things we should have done, but that thy mercy is greater than our neglect.

Grant us thy grace that we who have received mercy may also show mercy and do all we can for one another. Teach us how to bear one another's burdens. May our church fellowship provide a home for the lonely, an house of defense for the tempted and rest for the heavy laden. Here may the sorrowing be comforted and the complacent be stirred to do thy will. Make thy church the servants of thy compassion, to recover the fallen, to care for the needy, to minister to the sick, and to lead little children into thy ways. Draw us unto thyself, O Lord, that we may be united to one another in a common faith and devotion.

We look to thee, O God, for guidance amid the confusion of our day. Give us grace to listen to what thou hast to say that we may not be blinded by fear or by self-interest, but in thy light may see the way we should go and what we must do. Free our minds of the shackles of prejudice and intolerance that we may think clearly. Inspire us with a vision of the best that will make us ever dissatisfied with things as they are. Stir us to do hard things and give us the courage to do right things

Speak to each person in this Sanctuary today. May no one leave feeling that the hour was wasted, but may each of us sense that the Divine Spirit is here.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

9/21/58

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There comes a time when we just have to celebrate. Life goes along on an even keel, or may even tip down a little, until one day we suddenly realize that we possess something valuable. We become almost overwhelmed and we want to shout. Throughout the ages this has happened to men and has resulted in many great poems, in immortal music, and great art. The other day I was sitting in my car over at the Loudon Shopping center. Some boys came along. There was an older boy about twelve and two younger boys. The older boy was undertaking to explain something. I heard him say, "I wish they had one of those one cent sales." One of the smaller boys said, "What's that?" "You don't know what a one cent sale is? Why—they have T.V.'s and all sorts of things that you can buy for a cent. They know they are losing money but the just do it to ~~celebrate~~" he got lost at this point and groped for words to explain why anyone would do that. Then, he got it and went on, "they just do it to celebrate!" All of his eagerness and enthusiasm went in to the explanation. Perhaps he was making a profound observation that there comes a time in every persons life when he must celebrate. Aristandin Oyrachas his hero toss his purse at a ~~passer~~. His companions chide him with a reminder that it was all he had and that it was a very foolish thing to do. He replies, Yes, but what a gesture!

The doxology ~~is~~ an important element in Christian worship and dates from early Jewish times. We think of only the so-called long meter doxology but actually there are many including the marvelous Gloria in Excelsis at the close of the communion service, the Te Deum and many other hymns and psalms. In the book of Ezra, in the Old Testament there is Ezra's doxology. "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 which is in Jerusalem."

The Israelites had been in exile for many years. From time to time some attempt had been made to resettle the homeland and to rebuild the temple. ~~Actually the temple had been started and then the work was stopped.~~ The work of Nehemiah had made Judaea inhabitable and work had actually begun on the temple. This, however,

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had been stopped. Now, some twenty years later, another group led by Ezra returned and finished the building. Ezra had the support of the king and he brought with him not only volunteers to work but money and other material resources. This doxology of Ezra represents his hymn of praise for the house of the Lord. As we start this week in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the rebuilding of our temple there are some things which we should remember and which are suggested by Ezra's experience.

First, you will notice that Ezra considered this a Divine movement. "Blessed be the Lord, the God of our Fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king." Oftentimes around our homes we hear the expression: Where in the world did you get that idea? Ezra has no doubt where the idea of beautifying the temple came from. It came from God. Some of us have shied away from the idea of Divine initiative only to come back to it as a basic principle. We affirm our belief in a God who can take the initiative with men and in his own way can speak to them. The hymn has it

"I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true,
No, I was found of Thee."

Ezra was able to face many difficulties that could have defeated him because he believed that this was a Divine movement.

Second, there had to be response in the heart of the king and also in the heart of Ezra and all the people who went with him. God strikes the spark but we fan it into flame. Isaiah went into the temple and beheld God high and lifted up. His experience would have vanished in a puff of sentiment had he not said: Here am I, send me. It has been that too many modern Christians answer, Here am I send George! To relate our encounter with God to our day and to the problems at hand is our task. We are willing enough to have God take the initiative and to speak to us but we are so unwilling to go where he sends us. I was preaching one Sunday in a small church where the choir sat along side the pulpit. All during the early part of the service I heard an argument going on in the choir. It continued even during the prayer. The problem was that one woman had not been to rehearsal and she did not want to sing the anthem. The answer was that the anthem was not difficult — it was a hymn from a gospel hymnal. She would have none of it. When it came time for the anthem the women on either side of her took hold of her elbows and lifted her right up. She looked rather

surprised and then in a voice that could be heard all over the church said, "NO!" and sat down. Most startling of all ~~the~~ ^{were} the words of the anthem: "If Jesus goes with me I'll go anywhere." We sing it, but all the time by our lives were are saying, NO. The Divine encounter demands the human response. Men must answer. Just as in the day of Ezra the king, Ezra, and the people must respond so in the day this building was built people had to respond and if the church is to go on they must continue to respond.

In the third place beautifying the temple was only a part of Ezra's commission. Really the most important contribution made by Ezra was to carry up to Jerusalem a copy of the Torah, the sacred Law. Ezra read this law to the people just as Sunday after Sunday words from the Book have been read from this pulpit. This is all a part of our faith, the idea that the Divine has something to say to us. This is the thing we are trying and have been trying for years to say to the people who have entered our doors. We say it in the rich symbolism of this beautiful building, the choir and the organist say it through their music, the ministers say it in their prayers and through the reading of the Scripture and the preaching of the word. We proclaim it through the Sacraments — God has something to say to you. "Thus said the Lord" was the prophet's word, as the prophets tried to translate God's disciplines into daily action.

Let me read you a short paragraph — "The church may well, as one of its activities, promote discussion of current problems, but no church justifies itself simply by becoming a forum. Indeed, I should go further. While I have a great respect for what has sometimes been called 'humanism' in its nobler form, I do not think that the church, at any rate the Christian church, has any particular significance for society except as it has something fundamental to say about the universe and man's relation to it. That is to say, about metaphysics, or more concretely, theology. For the minister a social conscience and some humanitarian enthusiasm are no substitutes for a living message about a God in whose love and power he found not only his own peace, or his own escape out of the world, but also his ground of hope for the victory of the Kingdom of God and peace for all mankind." Who wrote that — a Bishop, no that was written by Norman Thomas. Do not misunderstand me — I believe that the church and its minister must be concerned and involved in every good cause that deals with man

In the fourth place, Sara not only read the law, he taught it. I think that you will discover that the teaching area of our church building is at least as large, if not larger than the Sanctuary. That is not surprising when we remember that Howard Hagaman had such a large part in the planning of the building. I remember him as the Chairman of our Conference Board of Education. I remember him fighting on the floor of the Conference for Christian Education. This morning we dedicated our church school workers. You have in your hands the list of these devoted people who have consecrated themselves to do the work of teachers in the Christian church. It is not an easy task. Yet it is at this point that the church succeeds or fails. Are you equipped to teach in the church school? You say, I have no training. Well, you just have the most marvelous opportunity to get some training starting tomorrow night in the Federation Leadership School which is being held right in this church! When ~~was~~ Mrs. Huntington or Mrs. McCormack or Ralph Tibbette comes to you and asks you to teach just remember this — God may be speaking to you just as he did to Sara. It is a solemn moment when you say NO to God. ~~It is a solemn moment~~ To simply read the law is useless—we today must teach and how can we teach if we do not have teachers?

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I Introduction

A. The need to celebrate
 vaults is the dot always.

B. Ezra's doxology.

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27-28 Ezra's Doxology

Opposition's Bible
 "This, then, was a divine movement. It can only be accounted for by ascribing the original impulse to God. ... The man who can perceive this movement as fit for any very great of business is fit for any enterprise. His transcendent faith will carry him through difficulties that would be insuperable to the worldly schemer."

Beautifying the temple is only part of Ezra's commission - He is to carry up to Jerusalem a copy of the Law of God.

To teach those who do not know it.

His great purpose is to make what he believes to be the will of God known and to see that it is obeyed.

The very idea of a Torah implies a divine will in religion. It prescribes upon us what the often forgetful fact that God has something to say to us about our conduct, that which

1. It was a divine movement. God's initiative.

2. But men were needed.

3. Beautifying the temple is only part of Ezra's commission.

4. Carry up to Jerusalem a copy of the Law of God.

5. To teach those who do not know it.

6. When he got to Jerusalem the gladden was great.

7. We have come into a splendid heritage. It has an overwhelming

"In The Sight Of The Lord"

Stephen F. Bayne.

The life blood of the Christian religion is not penitence, it is discipleship. Penitence is essential and it is inseparable: but it is always, or properly we begin our washing with penitence. But the last act is a blessing, not a confession - a blessing of Christ's soldiers going forth to war.

"... and there comes a time in every encounter with God, when we should rise from our knees and set off again where we left off."

we are serving him it is not only to be zealous, but we must also be obedient."

"Equipped with a royal edict, provided with rich contributions, inspired with a great religious purpose, confident that the hand of God was upon him, Ezra collected his volunteers, and proceeded to carry out his commission with all practicable speed."

With noting that when he got to Jerusalem there was little to attract a new generation - the gladden had gone.

When it came, the revival of the great old metropolis is the Holy City. It springs up among the ruins of Babylon.

It is important to notice that the great religious revival of Babylon springs up in the plains of Judah.

1. It is initiated in the experience of the captivity - in humiliation and loss, and after long suffering over the measure of the great chastisement.

2. The religious revival appeared in a centre of scientific and literary culture.

We have to combine the concrete historical religion with the universal, living spiritual religion. And as faith that shall be true both objectively and subjectively - true to the facts of the universe, and true to personal experience.

"Ezra is presented to us as a man of a deeply devout nature. He cultivated his own personal religion before he attempts to influence his compatriots. The influence of his compatriots, the chronicler tells us that he had prepared (devoted) his heart, to seek the law of the Lord to do it. Think our haste to obtain results in Christian service, there is danger that the need of personal preparation should be neglected."

Examine of the Psalmist - "While I moved the fire burned."

"The man of true religion is he who has the hand of God resting upon him, whose thought and action are inspired and swayed by the mysterious truths of the Unseen."