**Sermon Notes – Sunday 30th June 2024**

**‘God’s Big Story – the journey to restoration’**

We are continuing our series looking at how we understand the big story of God’s activity in the Old Testament so that we can appreciate how it shapes the cultural and religious background of the New Testament.

We are lingering this week in the journey from exile in Babylon (modern day Baghdad) to restoration back in the promised land.

We are exploring what this teaches us about God, his purposes for his people and the part we play in that process of restoration.

Last week Andrew explained how the experience of exile for the people of God awakened them to how they carried responsibility for the withdrawal of God’s hand of protection over them. (2 Chronicles 36:15-17, Ezekiel 33:10 NLT)

* To what extent might we try to excuse our sin by calling it an ‘error of judgement’? Where might you have heard that expression recently in the political debate?
* Psalm 137:1 captures the sense of despair and desolation experienced by those in exile. Can you identify an occasion when you felt a similar sense of despair?
* Jeremiah (Jer 29:10-14) reassures the people that God has not abandoned them and will restore them. How might this passage speak to us today?
* 2 Chronicles 7:14 suggests a ‘road map’ back into relationship with God based on God’s people meeting certain conditions. What are these? With an approaching General Election how might these conditions and promises apply to our national life today?
* Nehemiah in his prayer of confession (Nehemiah 1:1-7) accepts responsibility for the sins of previous generations. To what extent is this a model for how we should pray for our nation?
* Having restored the Temple and rebuilt the walls, the people then had an opportunity to recommit to orientate their lives around a relationship with God in prayer and worship (Neh 8: 1-3, Neh 9:1-3).
* What do these passages suggest is necessary for spiritual renewal individually and corporately.

Conclude your discussion by saying a prayer of confession together. It might be the General Confession from the prayer book as prayed on Sunday.

**The General Confession**

“Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy 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 thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous and sober life. To the Glory of thy holy Name. Amen.”