



Handout for week of 1/21/19 Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21 & Neh. 8: 2-10

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Stone, Naomi. [Path of the Wayfarer](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Our Longing for God's Justice](#)

[Lk 4: 14-21](#) video

(Bolded text omitted from reading)

Nehemiah 8: 1 all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spoke unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. **2** And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. **3** And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the Law. **4** And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; **and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.**

**5** And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people--for he was above all the people--and when he opened it, all the people stood up. **6** And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered: 'Amen, Amen', with the lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads, and fell down before the LORD with their faces to the ground. **7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, even the Levites, caused the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place.** **8** And they read in the book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. **9** And Nehemiah, who was the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people: 'This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep.' For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. **10** Then he said unto them: 'Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'

c. 480-397	480 Esther becomes Queen of Persia 458 Ezra sent to Judah 444 Nehemiah 397 Prophecy of Malachi	Ezra's reforms; building of Second Temple	* Greece: Persian Wars; Classical Age; Pericles in Athens; Parthenon built; Socrates, Plato, Euripides, etc.; Peloponnesian War
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COMMENTARY: In the first reading, Ezra the Scribe is opening the scroll of the day, which he reads to the assembled populace of tiny Judea. The people have returned to the land, leaving the place of their captivity in Babylon. And although they have been back for over a century, they have not been notably successful in settling and re-establishing their presence, and their faith, in the land. Ezra the Scribe is about to take care of the matter.

The morning-long reading of the law, followed by the affirmation of the people of Judea, is a covenant renewal. It is a renewal of the people who had been dispirited by the experience of return, and lack of success in firing up the faith again in the homeland. Ezra's renewal changes all that. No longer a nation among the nations, no longer a nation state in the political world. Judea had to come to terms with the new conditions of their existence.

They had to accept the fact that they could not be a kingdom, but at best a common people, united by a common faith, and that this must suffice. It is Ezra who brought that lesson home, and began for them a new day. One can make the claim that what we call Judaism as a religion can be dated from this day. And so Ezra, like Jesus opened the book on a new day. For Ezra it was a matter of calling Israel back to observance of the law. It was a call to repentance, and a demand for a stricter adherence to the injunctions of the law.

Because Israel listened to him, it was also the beginning of a new day. Because Israel heard the word that was read to them