**The Return**

**(Ezra 1:1-11)**

**Yearly Theme: *“Joy is…”***

**Series Title: *“Joy in Returning Home”***

**August 2nd, 2020**

***Something to think about:***

God is in control!

Do we really believe that statement? It’s a claim that’s been made by many a church and many a Christian throughout the ages, “God is in control.”

But how, we might ask, is God in control? Everything that is happening in the world seems like utter chaos and lunacy. “If God is in control,” we reason, “then why are things so bad?” And, “If God is in control, and things are as bad as they are, then I’m not sure that I want to follow that kind of a god.”

So, how is God in control? Well, we don’t have to look any farther than the Bible to see that throughout human history, God has utilized and orchestrated events, nations, kings, and individuals to bring about His perfect purposes and goals. His hand of grace, mercy, and yes, even judgement, are a part of His plan to bring about redemption and hope for a broken and fallen world.

A change of heart, a conviction of the soul, a softening of the will, and at times, a hardening of the heart, are just a few ways that God moves and works to bring about positive change in the world for His Kingdom and His glory. And, lest we think He is selfish and manipulative for doing this, we do well to remember that God’s very nature is goodness and love.[[1]](#footnote-1) He doesn’t delight in bringing affliction or suffering upon humanity, rather He delights in showing patience and unfailing love.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Our passage today is an example of this.

**Turn in your Bible to: *Ezra 1:1-11***

If God is in control, then that means He has the ability to change the heart of some of the most powerful people in the world. Which leads to our key point this morning…

**Key Point: *“God can change the heart of kings.”***

Why is it important to know this? Let’s try and break this down today…

* **God is not only aware of what’s going on in the world, He’s active in all things bringing about His perfect will.**

*Acts 17:24-28a (NLT), 24  “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, 25  and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. 26  From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.*

*27  “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. 28  For in him we live and move and exist.*

* **God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose for them.**

*Romans 8:18-28 (NLT), 18  Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19  For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20  Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, 21  the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22  For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23  And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24  We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don’t need to hope for it. 25  But if we look forward to something we don’t yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)*

*26  And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27  And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. 28  And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

***Something to take home:***

**Key Point: *“God can change the heart of kings.”***

If God can change the heart of kings, do you believe He can change your heart?

If you’ve been wandering away from your hearts true home (Jesus), then maybe it’s time to come home. If you’ve found yourself at the end of your rope (or even in the middle of it), what are you waiting for? God’s desire is to make you new and washed clean of the sin in your life. You who are struggling with doubt, tossed about like a small boat on a wild, tumultuous ocean of confusion, frustration, and maybe even anger, God desires to rescue you, but you have to be willing to *be* rescued.

No matter who you are, what you’ve done, how far you’ve drifted, or how lost you may be, God welcomes you home! Come home.

1. 1 John 4:7-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Psalm 30:5 and Micah 7:18. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)