

Zechariah 7 "Renovating the Heart toward Justice"

Read Zechariah 7:1-12a

A delegation is sent to the temple to inquire about the continued addition of two new fast days to the Jewish faith. God through Zechariah responds by addressing the human heart, our hearts. They are invited to turn away from a season of lament to a season of healing for their lament had become self-serving.

1. In what ways can lamenting over a past loss become self-serving?
2. God invites the people of Israel to repent of injustice, so that they will not return to the patterns that led to their exile. In what ways were the people avoiding repentance? Are there ways we avoid repentance?
3. What do we learn about God's desires for his people / his world through this passage?
4. In the sermon Tim reflected on how we often seek to motivate toward justice using such tools as guilt / shame, sentimentality, and self-preservation. Do these work? Why or why not?

Read Isaiah 58:1-9

Isaiah draws a link between keeping the day of atonement fast and the practice of justice. The day of atonement recalled that our relationship with God is not predicated on our performance but his love, grace and forgiveness and is stunned that they can remember that reality and at the same time oppress their workers. The beauty of God's grace is meant to renovate our hearts toward justice.

5. In his book *Generous Justice* Tim Keller reflects on the writings of Elaine Scarry whose thesis is that an experience of beauty makes us less self-centered and more open to justice. Reflect together on this quote and how the beauty of the gospel makes us just.