

## **Sermon Guides for Ezra – Esther (Post-Easter)**

**Series Title:** A Spiritual Makeover

**Tag Line:** New Life after Exile

**Dates (2020):** April 19, 26

**Key Verse:**

This is the answer they gave us: “We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.” (Ezra 5:11)

### **Series Overview**

Easter is not just a day out of the year. It is an ongoing, living reality, in which God is renewing us to new life and possibilities. Just as the exiles returned to Jerusalem and had to begin the long, difficult journey of rebuilding the temple, the walls, and their faith, we find ourselves on the other side of Easter saying, “Now what?” What difference should the resurrection make in our lives? The stories of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther demonstrate how God can do a “spiritual makeover” in our lives.

### **Colors, Images, Mood, Vibe**

White, bright, effervescent colors.

Images of renovation, home makeover.

Feelings of joy, hope, expectation, excitement, transformation.

## Sermon 1

**Title:** A Spiritual Makeover: Reform

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:1-8

**Key Word:** Reform

**Theme:** Ezra and Nehemiah Rebuild the City and Reform the People

**Main Idea:** Now that God has saved us through Christ, we have the power to live a new kind of life.

### Sermon Description:

The exiles returned to Jerusalem and found a world that needed massive rebuilding. Zerubbabel led a cohort of people to rebuild the Temple. The walls around the perimeter of the city needed reconstruction, and Nehemiah was entrusted with the task of leading the effort. Those walls were more than just a means of security for the city; it was a symbol of identity.

Ezra was also involved in a major renovation project as well: the rebuilding of people's commitment to God. The exiles had compromised their devotion by allowing themselves to intermarry, which was a sign of worshipping foreign gods. Ezra led them in a revival, summoning them to renewed faithfulness.

What is it that we are called to rebuild, as a result of Easter? Is it our worship of God? (Temple) Is it our identity? (Walls) Is it our commitment and faithfulness? (Reform)

**Note:** This was also Confirmation Sunday at Hyde Park UMC, in which we celebrated the spiritual commitment that our confirmations make to God and to the church.

## Sermon 2

**Title:** A Spiritual Makeover: Courage

**Scripture:** Esther 4:1-17

**Key Word:** Courage

**Theme:** Esther; Born for Such a Time as This

**Main Idea:** Esther courageously stepped forward in faith, and God used her to save her people from massacre. Likewise, God is calling us “for such a time as this,” to address injustice and oppression.

### **Sermon Description:**

The story of Esther is the only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned, yet God’s activity is clearly evident throughout the story. Esther saw the oppression of her fellow Israelites, and used her wisdom and cunning to save the people from certain doom. How is God calling each of us to demonstrate that kind of courage and cunning, to help those around us who are in need?