Today’s readings remind those Israelites in exile who are finally coming home to Jerusalem and other surrounding areas of who this God is that they follow. It reminds us who this God is that we follow. Being in forced exile it must have been nearly impossible to see how God continued to work in their lives. The Israelites were separated as a community, they had no worship space to go to, the Babylonians did not hold the same beliefs in the one God, they put some in labor camps, exile was a truly miserable time for the Israelites. God reminds them as they return to what is left of their home that they have survived and that they have not been alone. God reminds the Israelites that it is enough to just have done that much, but now it’s time to remember that the true power lies not with the Babylonians who captured them but in the God who gives them life and teaches them how to rise up again. Being in this pandemic, feels a little like forced exile to me. I don’t feel that I can be around my community at St. David’s and we don’t get to meet in the same physical space. Although, most of us have survived without contracting COVID or dying from COVID the losses in this country and the world are devastating. As we think about returning, we have to remember that though things are not as they were; we have survived. We have lost time together as a community and the day to day conversations we have when we care about another person and care about their life in Christ. But we have risen up even in our forced exile to care for our neighbors, to help those that literally cannot even get out of their own homes to know that they are loved, that there is food for them and their families and that the beloved community is not just confined to the walls of St. David’s or to the people that worship there. Rising up means bringing along those that have not previously even had a voice or a presence in the places we look to for leadership and guidance. In the conversations, articles and videos we have seen so far in Sacred Ground it is apparent that a huge part of racism is exclusion of blacks from almost all visible leadership positions and positions of authority. The fact that African American children rarely see a teacher, a doctor, a president, a politician, a scientist, etc…in the world around them, limits the vision they have for themselves. It tells them that these occupations are not available for them. There have been many blacks in these positions that we don’t read about in the history books, in novels etc..because they are excluded in school history too. When the bishop posted a story of Major Taylor recently it told not only of local history but the history of one of the best, fastest bicycle racers in the world. He was from Indianapolis and there is a bike league named for him. Taylor was forced to leave Indiana to pursue racing because of the extreme racism here. The NYT recently wrote an article on him and other previously hidden from view, black athletes. The article said: “I was in Worcester only a very short time before I realized that there was no such race prejudice existing among the bicycle riders there as I had experienced in Indianapolis,” Taylor wrote in his autobiography.

In 1896, Munger, likely Taylor’s manager, entered Taylor in a grueling six-day race at Madison Square Garden. It crushed him physically but catapulted him, just after his 18th birthday, into the world of professional cycling.

“He had to be terrified,” said Karen Brown-Donovan, his great-granddaughter, in an email, adding, “especially since he was the only person of color on the track.”

“The fact that he lasted for the duration of the six-day race was astonishing,” she said.

Ice water was thrown at him and nails laid in the path of his bicycle by members of rival racing teams. Riders routinely jostled and elbowed him — and he still won.

Perhaps the worst incident, [covered in The New York Times](https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1897/09/24/105953463.html?pageNumber=4), was in September 1897. After a one-mile race in which Taylor placed second, the third-place finisher, William Becker, “wheeled up behind Taylor and grabbed him by the shoulder. The colored man was thrown to the ground, Becker choked him into a state of insensibility, and the police were obliged to interfere.”

Becker accused Taylor of crowding him, something nobody else saw. He was later fined $50 but was allowed to continue racing.

In 1899, Taylor shocked the world by [winning the one-mile sprint](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/102i5w9ffZdq6w8-2BwKkPBVt5BPjtuO9) at the world championship in track cycling, the second black athlete, after the Canadian bantamweight boxer George Dixon, to win a world title in a recognized sport. But for all his newfound celebrity, racism still held him back, even in Worcester. When he moved into a new house, his neighbors at first tried to get him to relocate. And with Jim Crow laws in full force, he wasn’t spared on the track, either. Taylor despite a very successful biking career ended up buried in a paupers’ grave near Chicago. When his career was over he too was exiled.

Lori Stant recently posted an article on Face book. It was about a young woman named Kate Warne who wanted to be a detective in 1856, she applied for a job and was told that woman could not do this kind of work. She ended up convincing Detective Pinkerton that she was the person for the job and her biggest achievement was keeping President Elect Lincoln alive during an assassination plot before his inauguration. She was able to talk to people and be in places unnoticed and in ways that men could not. She once extracted a confession from a criminal while posed as a fortune teller. We don’t hear about Ms. Warne in our history books and we still don’t see many female detectives but she was able to rise up from the exile placed on woman by the society and culture of the time. There are millions of stories that have not yet been shared of the oppressed rising up even in their invisiblity to do God’s work in this world. One of our goals this year as a vestry is to start making the stories of the people of St. David’s heard by our community. Who knows maybe we can invite our neighbors to share their stories with us some day?

When Jesus gathers with the disciples today in the home of Simon and Andrew with James and John we learn that Simon’s mother in law was exiled from participating in her community due to a fever. Fevers were potentially fatal in this time period, still are today as they indicate infection, and Jesus is asked and agrees to heal her. She is immediately reincorporated into the life of the community. Jesus continually brought unlikely, unheard, people to the forefront of his ministry to rise up and be heard and healed.

I don’t know how many of you are Hamilton fans but I caught the fan bug when my kids learned the whole musical by heart. We saw it and it was quite inspiring and revealed a piece of history not usually discussed about how this country was created from its inception. Created by People like the young Hamilton, an immigrant escaping poverty, lack of education and an orphan. The song that sticks with me as encouragement when life seems to place us in exile is called “My shot” but the words Rise up are what I remember, I sometimes say it to my kids to remind them that life’s opportunities to rise up need to be embraced fully the song goes like this: I am not throwin' away my shot
I am not throwin' away my shot
Hey yo, I'm just like my country
I'm young, scrappy and hungry
And I'm not throwin' away my shot

And but we'll never be truly free
Until those in bondage have the same rights as you and me
You and I
Do or die
Wait 'til I sally in on a stallion
With the first black battalion
Have another shot

Whoa, whoa, whoa
I said shout it to the rooftops
Whoa, whoa, whoa
Said, to the rooftops
Whoa, whoa, whoa

A-come on (yeah)
Come on, let's go

Rise up
When you're living on your knees, you rise up
Tell your brother that he's gotta rise up
Tell your sister that she's gotta rise up

When are these colonies gonna rise up? (Whoa, whoa)
When are these colonies gonna rise up? (Whoa)
When are these colonies gonna rise up? (Whoa)
When are these colonies gonna rise up?

Rise up

We may be in the process of returning from exile but I am hopeful and praying that we too will rise up.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.