

Longing for Restoration

Isaiah 2:1-5

What do you think about when you hear the word restoration? As someone who enjoys antiques, I think of taking something old and worn and making it look like new. For something to look new, or at least better than it did when you got it, a process of renewal, or restoration, needs to take place. Take a piece of furniture for example. The finish may be faded or chipping. Maybe some parts are loose and wobbly. That ragged finish must first be removed before a new finish can be applied. Removing the finish may take the use of sandpaper, a wire brush, or caustic chemicals. Uneven areas may need to be planed off. Loose pieces may need to be nailed or screwed back together. All of these are harsh methods used to make something old and worn look nice again. If I were that piece of furniture, I'm not sure I'd be too excited about the process of being restored! Yet, once restoration has taken place there is new life for that piece of furniture.

In our Scripture reading for this morning, Isaiah speaks to a people in need of restoration. The kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes, had long ago been obliterated, so at this time only Judah remained. The descendants of David, the kings of Judah, had not always followed in his footsteps and the people suffered because of it. Although Judah was experiencing a time of great wealth and prosperity, the glory of the nation was only

skin deep. There was great wealth in material things, but the things of the spirit were greatly lacking. Several kings had set up altars on the high places where people could worship idols. The Temple doors had even been barricaded and Temple worship ceased. The people had no one to instruct them on God's law and so they descended into all manner of decadence and depravity – idol worship, child sacrifice, sexual immorality, and the list goes on. It is into this environment that Isaiah brought his words of prophecy.

Isaiah spoke of a time of restoration that would happen in “the last days.” Restoration is coming, but there is much that will happen before that time. In the following chapters he foretells what will happen before this restoration can take place. The people will be subjected to war and famine, brother will turn against brother, Jerusalem will fall. The road to restoration would be rough.

It was Isaiah's task to articulate to God's people that although these things would happen, in “the last days” things will be different. God's house will be established on the highest mountain, to be seen by Jews and Gentiles alike. Instead of worshipping at the high places where sacrifices were made to blind and dumb idols, all people will make their way to the mountain of God to worship Him alone. It will be God Himself who will instruct the people.

And what is it that God will instruct the people about – peace, love, justice, and harmony. When all people learn these things there will no longer be a need for weapons of war and swords will be beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks. These must have been strange words for the people of Isaiah’s time to hear as they watched the enemy setting up siegeworks outside their walls. These strange words were meant to help the people look beyond their current situation to what God would do for them despite their disobedience to him.

Like the people of Isaiah’s time, we, too, are looking for that peace and harmony that will come in “the last days,” as we anticipate and celebrate Christ’s birth, we look forward to his second coming and a rebirth, a restoration, of mankind to what God had originally intended. But in the meantime, our road can be rough.

Although the world around us is full of violence and strife, we are called to focus our attention on “the last days,” those days of restoration. As we look for restoration in the world, we also look for restoration in our own lives. Many of us seek restored health, repaired relationships, financial security, or even a restoration of our faith. Trust that God is at work on restoring us as individuals. He is sanding down the rough edges of jealousy and judgement. He is planning off the splinters of shame and grief. He is scraping away layers of learned behaviors that have no place in His kingdom. He is tightening up wobbly faith with

His Word and Christian friends who come along side to give us comfort and support. The process of restoration is not easy, but it is necessary.

But then you might ask: “What do we do while we are waiting for the last days and total restoration?” We are to watch because that day is almost here. However, we are not to sit on our hands while we watch and wait.

We are to be early members of that throng who call out “let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, . . . He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” As followers of the Light of the World, we are to bring that light to others. By sharing the light of Christ with others, the words of Isaiah will be fulfilled that “the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Like ripples on a pond, as we share God’s Word with others, they in turn embrace the Word and go on to share with even more people. As God’s Word spreads in this troubled world, more and more light will shine. Justice, mercy, and genuine humility will increase so that in time the last days *will arrive* where swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

In our own lives, we are to keep our eyes on the promises of God, and to live out His commands in order to experience His restoration in our lives. God’s own Son, the Babe of Advent makes clear the promise of restoration with these words from The Book of Revelation:

¹² “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴ “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

Rev. 22:12-14

And we as God’s people say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

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