

New hope sermon shalom as restoration

He restores my soul

Have you ever had a time when you felt dry and broken inside and cried out to the Lord: Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me? (Ps. 51:12) I had such a time coming out of a prolonged physical sickness. I was meeting with another friend who was battling fibromyalgia at the time and we were sitting in Cantigny Park at the fountain area. Water was flowing freely; the birds were singing, the flowers were in bloom and I wanted that in my own soul. As I was sitting with the Lord that day, He brought the words: "I will restore your soul."

In our broken world with so many people walking wounded, or dealing with deep disappointment or suffering, one important aspect of shalom is God's restoration. The verse that God gave to me that day was His promise that He said He would fulfill. It comes from Ps.. 23: start it with me. (pp.)



"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still water. He restores my soul." (pp.) The image of restoration as shalom is captured in this picture of the lamb being held tenderly by the shepherd.

The Passion Translation adds *He revives my life or causes like for my soul to return.* The note on v. 3 says "so often life drains out of us through our many activities but David found that God restores our well-being (our shalom) by helping us pursue what pleases Him (He leads me in paths of righteousness so I can bring honor to His name). And this comes after or as He *"offers me a resting place (green pastures and still waters) in his luxurious love. He takes me to an oasis of peace."* (Passion translation Ps. 23:3)

I asked Bing, our resident Hebrew scholar) what the word "restores" means in Ps.23:3 in the Hebrew and here is the answer: "The words "emphasizes **intensive action**. In addition this verb is also in the imperfect tense, indicating an **ongoing, continuous action**. The root form of the verse means to "turn back, return, bring back, restore,, refresh and take back – thus, God is the one, not us, who for His children is intensively **"turning us back, bringing us back, restoring, refreshing and taking us back"** to a place of spiritual life and health in which our "soul" (i.e., our deepest, inner most spiritual, mental and emotional being) is replenished with His eternal and life-giving presence and truth."(Justin Alfred, "Biblical Hebrew Applied: Ps. 23, (Part 3)" 2012) It's actually His goodness which restores our soul, isn't it?

So it's never a botched up job.

If you're afraid of the legendary curse of King Tutankhamen, be very, very glad that you're not one of several (unnamed) employees tasked with curating the pharaoh's priceless burial treasures at Cairo's Egyptian Museum. Through a series of unfortunate events, the iconic beard on the boy-king's golden funeral mask was broken off. This is bad enough news in itself, but pressured from museum higher-ups to repair the damage quickly, curators botched the restoration effort by using a cheap white epoxy glue to stick the beard back on (we promise this isn't the plot to a scrapped Three Stooges episode). The results? The ancient ruler of Egypt now has scratches on his ancient chin, a crooked beard with a nasty

looking gap, and white glue visible at the seam—not exactly in keeping with an utterly irreplaceable treasure. It does make for a good illustration though—aren't you glad that God's efforts to restore the whole world (and our lives) is undertaken with more care? Rather than sloppy jobs of restoration, God's work may take time. But he will always, miraculously leave things better than we found them. (Preaching Today, News that illustrates Sunday Feb. 1-8th.)

But allowing His goodness to shine through is the issue.

“The Sistine Chapel is one of the true jewels of world art. After spending four years painting it, Michelangelo finished his masterpiece in 1512, and the chapel went into daily use. In those days the only light source came from candles. As candles burned year after year, the soot began to rise to the ceiling, obscuring the paintings. After over 400 years of soot, grime, and dust collecting on the ceiling, the original art had to be restored. So a team of restorative artists worked on the Sistine Chapel from 1984-1999 until the monochrome colors were restored to their original beauty.

Prior to the restoration process, many in the art community thought that Michelangelo was a genius at composition. After all, how did he think to have Adam's hand stretching out, yearning to find the finger of God, which was already reaching out for him? But it was also widely-believed that Michelangelo's coloration was mediocre. It was too dark, monochromatic, and blah. And yet when they restored those frescoes to their original state, everyone could see the beautiful, fresh, and even spring-like colors—pale pink, apple green, vivid yellow, and sky blue against a background of warm pearly grey. When the maker's true brilliance and goodness were revealed, people had to change their assumptions about Michelangelo. This is the power of restoration – as in this other example of two photographs – a before and an after view of this mischievous little girl.

Restoration in a broken life

In the book *Finding Beautiful* I reviewed last week, the stories of 12 millennials were told – and each one demonstrated this restoring work of God – particularly as they were restored from the lies they believed that were destroying their self-confidence and peace and inner stability. Let me tell you one of those stories:

Amy was a young millennial who believed the lie that she had to be perfect so she could please everyone and never face the humiliation she experienced from an abusive, bullying 4th grade teacher. His negative remarks led her into teenage anorexia, which in turn caused fights with her family and her sense of failure that she ‘wasn’t the perfect daughter anymore” (pp. 95-96).

Perfectionism wrecks and poisons hearts, but grace can restore us as it overwhelms us with a sense of our inadequacy and rives us to cling to God more closely (*Leadership Pain*, p. 29). But Amy hadn’t experienced that grace yet. She began cutting herself and even contemplating suicide. “One day, she said, ‘I hiked up to Beachy Head, the suicide point where so many had taken their lives...Suddenly, I felt a presence, as if an unseen hand was pulling me back from the edge. Something shifted ever so slightly in my soul, challenging the brooding agony with a calm reminder that she was still loved’....

Shortly after this, Amy heard of a Christian residential program for girls [and enrolled]...Like skilled physicians removing old bandages from a wound, the counselors peeled off the layers of lies that masked Amy’s true heart.” [As she countered each lie with God’s truth, God’s grace took hold in her heart.]
Lie #1: I am never going to fail again. Truth: I will make mistakes, but I am still loved. When needed, I will forgive myself. Lie#2: I must never accept anything below perfection in my life. Truth: I will do my best and aim high, but my identity is not based on success. Lie#3: I will always let everyone down. Truth: I am not responsible for everyone, so I will



make healthy boundaries and expectation that I can reasonably achieve. Lie#4: It would be better if I could just disappear. Truth: I am valuable and wonderfully made by God, and He has a plan for my life.” What does her restoration look like in Amy’s life today? She is free from eating disorders and depression and enjoys a healthy life as a childcare worker.” Here she is dancing below the suicide location at Beachy Head where she almost took her own life. (Rebecca Friedlander, *Finding Beautiful*, Baker Books, 2019, pp. 96-100).

As in the problem of Michelangelo’s Sistine chapel painting, for many us over the years the soot, grime, and dust of daily life have obscured our vision of God’s goodness. God’s character seems blah, mediocre, and maybe even dark. We no longer feel and deeply believe that through Christ we have a good Father. In addition, the negative words and behavior of others towards us and the lies we believe because of that adds to our grime and distorted image. God’s beautiful work in creating us is marred. But through the Word of God, the Spirit’s presence, and the love of other Christians, God begins a work of restoration so we can see the true colors of his brilliant goodness” and believe we can reflect that beauty.

Marti just brought back for me this paua shell from New Zealand. I think it’s an example of the transformation that restoration does in our lives. The paua are only found in New Zealand and they are an alabone which attaches itself to the rocks all along the coasts. They are covered with barnacles and encrustations but when they are harvested, people dig out the meaty flesh inside (like what’s inside an oyster) and then apply sandpaper and various cleaning chemicals till the inside shell gleams with these iridescent colors. Isn’t it beautiful? It’s like what God wants to do with each of us. Like the paua shell, Amy is being transformed to reflect the beauty God put in her originally.



Can you see how restoration is related to shalom? God understands our reasons for brokenness or a feeling of weariness or being “drained”, but He wants to bring us back to full strength and refreshment. Still, it is not a one-time occurrence. Notice how “the verb restores indicates an ongoing continuous action.” (Alfred. Idem). This tells us that God is also in the business not only of restoring but of preserving and maintaining that shalom. I find this incredibly encouraging. Restoration when our original beauty created as a child of God is marred and we are weary and need to be refreshed in His presence – feeding in green pastures, lying down beside still waters.

Restoration After Battle

But, there is a second key text on restoration that connects restoration to shalom from a different perspective. This is I Peter 5:10. The context is in v. 8-9: *Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers^[a] all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.* Here the context is spiritual warfare. We are not in a neutral universe, beloved, and all the suffering and sickness, catastrophes and lies in our minds are coming from an intelligent enemy whose purpose is “to steal, kill and destroy” (*Jn.10:10*) all God’s people and God’s kingdom agenda. In that fight, if we believe Satan’s lies, we can get weary and drained and worn down – which is Satan’s agenda according to Daniel 7:25. The word for “wear down” there is also translated “oppress.” In the constant battle with the evil one we can become discouraged, weak and vulnerable to defeat and me-centeredness – focusing all our energies on the battles we face and our circumstantial plight.

But God doesn't leave us here to fight his battles alone. Listen to the promise in v. 10+ 11: ¹⁰ *In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will **restore**, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.* ¹¹ *All power to him forever! Amen.* As God restores us to shalom, when we have been fighting battles against the evil one, God gives a sense of well-being and wholeness through His support, His strength and His power. What a wonderful promise this is!!!

This passage is particularly important because the Apostle Peter lived that message. He felt the attack of Satan when he denied Jesus and had to deal with the extraordinary weight of shame as a fallen apostle. Jesus called Satan an accuser of the brethren and so I'm sure Satan tried to destroy Peter through those shameful memories and accusations hour after endless hour. I'm sure he thought "I'm useless; I failed Jesus and all the other disciples. I should just disappear and go back to my old life."

But Peter also experienced the restoration from Jesus first hand. In the book I'm reviewing this week, *Leadership Pain*, the author Dr. Sam Chand has the best description of that encounter I've heard. He says: The story is "one of the most poignant conversation in the Bible which occurred a short time after Christ's resurrection. Peter and some others had gone fishing. By early morning they hadn't caught a single fish. A man on the beach called to them to lower their nets again, and they hauled in a huge catch of big fish. Instantly, Peter knew it was Jesus on the shore. He jumped in and swam to him.

Jesus had prepared breakfast for them. In his account John makes the point that Jesus was cooking fish over a charcoal fire. As Peter approached, the smell of the fire reminded him of the night of the arrest, the moment of his greatest sin, his deepest shame and his betrayal of the one to whom he had professed complete loyalty. Then Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" The question must have stabbed Peter's heart like a dull knife. The smell of the charcoal fire and now the words forced him to confront the deepest darkness in his life.

But Jesus wasn't being cruel; he was being thorough, kind and gracious. He knew that restoration could only happen with complete honesty. This painful and tender moment was the turning point in Peter's life. After that, he was no longer just talk. When he spoke about the wonder of God's forgiveness, he was speaking from experience. When he talked about the privilege of serving Jesus, it came from the depths of a forgiven, restored, thankful heart." (Sam Chand, *Leadership Pain*, Thomas Nelson, 2015, p. 179)

The Psalmist prayed: *Search me oh God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* ²⁴ *Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.* Ps. 139:23-24. This is a graphic description of the issues that lead to our brokenness – our lies, our anxious thoughts, what we say or do which offends God, and why we need His intervention. But Jesus also leads us beside still waters and in green pastures (Ps. 23) and restores our soul. Jesus is also the One who *restores us, and makes us strong, firm and steadfast when we have been assaulted by the evil one..1 Pet. 5:10.* Now, beloved are these texts true in our experience? This is my hope and prayer for all of us. Walking along God in restoration is the path of everlasting life and the key to our shalom. May He do that healing work in each of us this day. For His sake—and ours. Amen.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 8/4/19

I pray our song of response, I Offer My Life, will be truly our response to this restoring work of God:

"All that I am, all that I have, I lay them down before You, O Lord.

All my regrets, all my acclaim, the joy and the pain, I'm making them Yours.

Refrain: Lord, I offer my life to You , everything I've been through, use it for your glory.

Lord, I offer my days to You, lifting my praise to You as a living sacrifice,
Lord I offer You my life.
Things in the past, things yet unseen, wishes and dreams that are yet to come true
All of my hopes, all of my plans, my heart and my hands are lifted to You.
Refrain: Lord, I offer my life to You , everything I've been through, use it for your glory.
Lord, I offer my days to You, lifting my praise to You as a living sacrifice,
Lord I offer You my life.”
(words and music: Claire Clininger and Don Moen)