

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of November 29, 2009
"Restoration of Man"**

[Today's message focuses on how Jesus, through his shed blood, brings forgiveness and restoration to us.]

[Topics: Restoration; Release; Forgiveness; New Hope]

Excerpt: As was mentioned earlier in the reading, this is the first day of Advent, where we've lit the first candle – the candle of love. Advent is a four-week period created by the Christian church to point to the coming of Jesus. It concludes with the celebration of Jesus coming in the flesh as a baby. But the church also focuses on other aspects of the coming of Jesus.

Pastor Glenn started off by offering a little "quiz." He first asked, "What is Samson most famous for, in the Bible?" Answers from the congregation were – Delilah; his strength.

"What is Bathsheba most known for?" Answer – being an adulterous woman with King David.

Both of those people are known for what they did wrong, aren't they? "Now what are you most famous for?" And sometimes that's how we see ourselves for the wrong we've done. We are so often caught up in our shortcomings that we forget that part of the coming of Jesus is about dealing with those past issues.

Today's sermon is titled, "The Restoration of Men," because Jesus came to dwell in us and to restore us. Too many of us still carry those past mistakes with us. When we look in the mirror that's what we tend to see about ourselves. Too often we view life through what went wrong.

Last week we had a couple of prayer meetings down in Highland Park concerning the community. And one of the pastors had been terminated by his church. This pastor thought it was important to reach out to homeless people, to feed them and to invite them to church. The board fired the pastor because they didn't want homeless people around their church. In all probability, he perceives himself as the pastor that got fired, because of the way he looked.

Maybe we perceive ourselves as the person that got a divorce. Or the person who has estranged relationships with his/her children. We tend to view life through the skeletons in the closet, if we're not careful.

It's hard to grow up and continue in your congregation, because people remember your teenage years where you may not have done the best things. It's hard to get past those things. Sometimes it's hard to grow up because of the mistakes we've made along the way.

Now part of Advent is for us coming to understand that Jesus came to restore us. We lit the candle of love today. Then we will light the candles of hope, joy, peace and also the Christ candle.

These are all the things that Jesus Christ brings to us to help us get past some of those negative things in our lives. Or help us get past others' mistakes. Are we there in restoration? Are we there where Jesus is?

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he was in a synagogue. And in Luke 4, it says Jesus was invited to come and read. And so he opened up the scrolls to Isaiah. And he read about how he was sent to give sight to the blind, to give healing to the sick, to set the captive free, and to declare the year of the Lord or the time of release of people.

Jesus has come to bring us release; he's come to restore us. And part of Advent is to remind us the restoration that Jesus brings as well as the newness he brings to all people. Last week we read in 2 Cor. 5, that we shouldn't see people through a worldly view anymore. That means we can't see them for their weaknesses and sins. We need to look at them for who they are in Christ.

In Acts 3, Peter has healed a crippled beggar. The man had asked Peter and John for alms, but Peter told him that he had neither silver nor gold but something greater. And then Peter told him to rise and walk.

Part of the job of the church is to bring restoration through the Holy Spirit and through the work God is doing. We should spread the good news to others that God loves them and wants to help them get past where they are in life.

To the crowds that had gathered, Peter said to them in **Acts 3:19, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."**

And if anything should be focused on the refreshing of God, it should be his church. It should be his people who are walking in the Spirit and offering refreshing to people, saying you can be transformed; you can be changed. All of us need reminders not to see people where they are, but rather where God wants them to be.

20) "and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus." The Father has already sent Jesus to mankind. It's not that Jesus isn't available, but people have to open up their hearts to receive him, to be open to what Jesus has to offer. Most people don't see Jesus as a minister of restoration.

They see him as "rule-giver," because that's how he's been presented. Most churches talk about Jesus as someone who's going to take away all your fun. He's going to tell you all the things you can't do. Jesus, too often, is represented as a redneck Republican. But he isn't.

21) "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." So there's a time coming when all things will be restored. But in the meantime we need to turn to God so our restoration can begin right here, so that the change can begin to take place now.

We need to seek God for that change, because all of us have old habits and have old ways of doing things. We need God to guide and direct us. Now that Jesus has come in the flesh, it's possible that Jesus can come and live with us and bring restoration and transformation.

22) "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.'"

And this morning in Bible study we were reading and talking about the Holy Spirit and how he's come to tell us what Jesus is all about and to testify to us about him and his desire for us. God wants us to tell others and help them see who they can become – to see the transformation they can have as an alcoholic or drug addict, and to people who see themselves as worthless human beings because of their past problems and mistakes.

Advent encourages us to remember what God can do in a human being to help them become transformed, to help them grow into what God has in store for them. In Bible study, we also read the verse that talks about the sanctify work of the Holy Spirit. This is how the Holy Spirit takes us from where we were, and he works in us to the point where we become more like the image of God. And that's possible for every human being, no matter how broken they are.

Here's a quote from Kim Clement, a Christian writer and speaker. He writes about David and Samson.

David sinned, but when he was confronted with the sin, he took full responsibility for it and rose to the occasion by sorrowful repentance.

It took Nathan to come and give David a nudge. And sometimes we need a nudge and have a Nathan-type person come to us. Our spouse knows really well how to be Nathan.

God used David to bring Christ into the Earth as a result of his heart and faithfulness towards God. Samson, on the other hand, found more pleasure in the Philistine women than he did in God's destiny and plan for his life. His eyes were torn from their sockets, which represents spiritual blindness to us in this day. He spent most of his days working a mule's job at a grinding mill, basically going around in circles. Eventually he did fulfill God's purpose and will, but only after he had lost everything, and with great shame and embarrassment.

*Today, very seldom will you hear someone refer to Samson as the great deliverer of Israel, but rather as the Samson of "Samson and Delilah", sadly. It appears to me that there are many men that are in this position today and I believe that **God wants them fully restored and anointed**. Marriages are falling apart, churches are shutting their doors, attorneys are getting richer from unnecessary bankruptcies, and women are having to step up to the plate and salvage the mess (no disrespect to women).*

Men can be restored, but in some cases after screwing things up, they just quit. If you read "Dear Abby" or "Ann Landers" you'll notice how often wives write in and say that they wanted to go to counseling but their husbands won't go. Why is that – because men don't want to acknowledge they might need some help, that they might need some restoration.

So do we think of Samson as a man who made a huge mistake with Delilah or do we think of **Judges 16:25**, where we see what Samson became?

"While they were in high spirits, they shouted, 'Bring out Samson to entertain us.' So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, 26) Samson said to the servant who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.'

27) Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. 28) Then Samson prayed to the LORD, 'O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.'

29) Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30) Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived."

This is quite a statement since Samson killed a thousand Philistines at once with a jaw-bone of a donkey. Here in his death, he delivered Israel from the Philistines. But we don't think of Samson delivering Israel, do we?

But he's in the Bible, because he's one of the judges. And what the judges did was to deliver Israel by listening to God. He's in the Bible, because of his deliverance. But we think only of his problem.

That's how we look at ourselves and others. Even though others may be doing great things for God, we say, "Yes, but..." Ted Haggard, pastor of New Life in Colorado Springs, is a good example. He got caught in an uncompromising situation and was relieved of his duties. But he wrote several good books about church unity and churches working together.

Yes, he really messed up, but that doesn't make him less of a man of God, necessarily. But we tend to look at the flaws of a person. God is a God of restoration. Jesus came to dwell in us through the Holy Spirit, so we can be restored and become a new person. God sent us out to help others, to offer them grace and understanding. Maybe there are some people in your life that you don't speak to that maybe you need to reach out to and offer some grace.

Now we were earlier asked – what is Bathsheba famous for? Do you know when she's last mentioned in the Bible? She listed as Jesus' great, great, great grandmother. Now she's not mentioned by name. Matthew calls her Uriah's wife.

She was famous for being the mother of Solomon, the wisest king to ever live. But we tend to think of her as the woman on the roof taking a bath. Yes, that's true too. But do you think when she is introduced in the World Tomorrow they will say, "And now here's Bathsheba, the one who slept with David."

No, she will be introduced as the mother of Solomon and the great, great, great grandmother of the Messiah, because God is the one who restores people. God brings new hope.

Now what about Adam and Eve? Now what they did was a big booboo. What they did, got all humanity in trouble. All of us are sinners because of them. Can Adam and Eve be restored? Did the second Adam have greater impact than the first Adam?

Pastor Glen doesn't think that the first Adam could make a sin that's too big for Jesus to fix and that includes Adam's own sin. Pastor Glen believes that Adam and Eve can be restored as the father and mother of humanity by the God of this universe.

It's interesting that God clothed Adam and Eve after they had sinned. Some people think that's because God was embarrassed by them. Here's a quote from Baxter Kruger's blog (called Baxter's Ongoing Thoughts) of Nov. 6, 2009 on this subject.

In the Genesis narrative Adam and Eve's fall left them hiding from the presence of the Lord. Terrorized and overwhelmed with guilt, they were not about to come out and face the Lord. And the Lord, in beautiful and astonishing grace, met them where they were in their new found darkness.

He clothed them. Most of us in the West, subject as we are to the trauma of legalism, would assume that the Lord clothed them so that He could look at them, given that He is so holy as to not be able to look upon sinners. Such a notion is the product, in my opinion, of the fallen mind. The act of clothing Adam and Eve is not about the Lord and His supposed need to be appeased, but about Adam and Eve and their afflicted conscience.

They have believed the lie, and doubted the very heart of the Lord. In believing that the Lord is not really for them they have adopted a profoundly alien paradigm. How could they possibly react to the presence of the Lord, given what they now believe about Him. The Lord, however, has set His heart upon Adam and Eve, and in them upon the race at large, to do us good beyond our wildest dreams. But now that Adam has bought the lie such relationship is beyond possibility.

The relationship faltered not because God changed, but because Adam and Eve changed. They were afraid of God and hid from him.

I submit that the clothing of Adam and Eve had no Godward direction at all. It had nothing to do with the fallen notion that we must pacify and angry God, or that God needs to be pacified. The clothing of Adam and Eve was an act of concession on the Lord's part, accommodating Adam's fallen imagination, in order to establish a real relationship with Adam and Eve in their fallenness.

In other words, God loved Adam and Eve so much that he didn't want them to be embarrassed. He didn't want them to stay in the darkness so long so that they couldn't relate to him, so he put nice clothes on them.

They covered themselves with fig leaves. Now fig leaves aren't too bad the first few hours. But wait till they dry out. It's like wearing a piece of sandpaper. So what did

God use? Leather. The longer you wear leather, the softer it becomes; the better it fits; the nicer it becomes. God gave them clothing so that they could feel more in relationship with him.

In His astonishing love, and in determination to fulfill His dreams for our adoption, the Lord stoops to meet Adam and Eve where there are, to relate to them as fallen creatures. He accepts the situation. He accepts the fall as reality for Adam and Eve. He does not approve of their debacle, but neither is He in denial about what has happened.

And God accepts us in our brokenness. He doesn't approve of it but he understands it. And he accepts us where we are. And the people out there, he accepts them where they are, in their hurt and in their pain and in their brokenness.

God takes such people and begins to restore them. He begins to put clothing on them that begins to draw them to him. He says, "I understand where you are in your darkness, let me help you come into the light."

Part of the incarnation of Jesus is that he comes to us as individuals and begins to transform us and change us. But sometimes we begin to believe the lie. And we hid in the bushes from God. We think that we really blew it this past week. And we ask ourselves, "What are we going to do now?" We believe the lie instead of allowing God to clothe us and say, "Come out of the bushes. I'm here to restore you. I'm here to help you. I'm going to do something great through you." That's what God told Samson and Bathsheba.

Now, let's take a look at the example of Matthew. Matthew knew Jesus intimately. He wrote one of the four Gospels. But how did Matthew start out? He was a tax collector. And they were the dregs of society. They were despised by their own people.

And so God takes a Matthew and says in **Matt. 9:9, "Come follow me!"** And then Jesus takes it one step further and says, "I want you to write my life's story." Jesus brought restoration to man named Matthew.

God is drawing us into himself and then he's asking us to go out into the community to help draw others into God. But you know, we need to have minds and hearts to reach out to others. Pastor Glen hopes that if broken people came into our congregation, we wouldn't avoid them.

What is each of us known for, at least in our own minds? When you think of yourself, are you known for your flaws and weaknesses? Do you let those thoughts dominate you? When you think about those things all the time, guess what we focus on – our flaws? We tell ourselves, "I'm too this and I'm too that."

We need to acknowledge that we're not like Jesus, and then focus on him to become more like him. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us become more like Jesus. We need to become a part of that transformation that God wants to bring us. We need to walk with him.

What does the lie in your fallen mind tell you – if you allow it? “You’re no good. You’re stupid. You’ll never succeed.” Many times we were told this as children. And that lie begins to sink in and take hold. But God can change all of that. That’s his promise – to transform us and to restore us.

In a lot of family arguments we hear phrases like, “Remember when you did this. And remember when you did that? Sometimes 40-year-old laundry comes out. That’s what we default back to if we’re not careful.

Instead of the past, we need to focus on what kind of man or woman of God are they today. Instead of the past, we need to focus on what God has done in their lives. God is inviting us into transformation. He’s inviting us to walk with the Holy Spirit. And he’s asking us to invite others into that same transformation.

And part of Advent is remembering God’s love for us. We lit the love candle today. God cared so much for us that even though we were hiding in the bushes like Adam and Eve, and we knew we were sinners, God said, “I love you so much that I’m sending my Son Jesus to help rescue you. And he’s going to change you and transform you and take away all those bad habits you have.”

One of Pastor Glen’s pet peeves is the various Christian churches quoting Romans 1 about homosexuality and how bad it is. And Paul does write that. But Paul goes on to also say in chapter 1 that these people became filled with every kind of wickedness. And then he lists gossip, anger, malice and all kinds of other things as worse than homosexuality. And we don’t hear the churches haranguing on those sins.

Isn’t it interesting, because those sins hit pretty close to home. But we forget the next verse that says that none of these people will go into the kingdom. We need Jesus to bring us into the kingdom, because he brings change and transformation.

He doesn’t say that if you are a gossip, you are lost forever. Jesus will help us not to be a person filled with anger, not to be a person filled with malice, and all the other characteristics that are mentioned there. Jesus came to bring transformation today.

Now we saw in Acts 3, that there is a time coming in the future when Jesus will restore everything. But too many people are waiting for Jesus to fix them in the future, instead of now. But now is the time for us to be restored. Now is the time God is working in our lives and hearts to bring transformation to us. And when Jesus comes back, he will take care of the rest – everything else will be restored that wasn’t restored before. But we need to understand that God is bringing restoration to us now.

Because we’re going to focus on Jesus Christ coming to us these next four weeks during Advent, pastor Glen wants us to have communion or participate in the Eucharist, which means thanksgiving, each week.

Today, we focus on the fact that Jesus brings healing and restoration to each and every one of us – to all mankind. So, we come to the table of restoration. It’s a reminder that by his broken body, we are healed – we are healed spiritually; we are healed emotionally. You see, it’s one thing to know in our head that we are spiritually restored,

but it's another thing to emotionally know it and to wake up every morning believing it. We need to let the past be the past and learn to move on.

When we come to the table, we should be reminded that Jesus took care of it 2000 years ago so you can participate in that healing. And through the cup we are reminded of the forgiveness, that he has washed us clean. We need to enter into that and invite others to enter into God's restoration.

Samson was a great, great deliverer of Israel. Bathsheba was the great grandmother of the Messiah and the mother of Solomon. Matthew became a great man of God and will be known for eternity for writing his Gospel. Peter, with his flaws, became a mighty apostle.

God takes broken people, because that's all of us, and he restores us to wholeness and then he uses us to his glory. So let's come to the table and remember that the restoration is possible only through Jesus Christ.

General Group Question: How do you remember people in the Bible – the good they've done or the mistakes they've made? Why do most tend to remember and focus on people's mistakes rather than the good things they've done?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. What does it mean to repent and turn to God?
2. Does God desire that all of humanity turn to him? Briefly explain your answer.
3. How does God look at us once we turn to him in repentance and yield ourselves to him? What Scriptures come to mind to support your viewpoint?
4. Can God restore all people, even the greatest sinners? If so, how does he do it?
5. How did Adam and Eve react towards God once they had disobeyed him? Why do you think they acted that way?
6. According to Luke 4, what was Jesus going to accomplish in his first coming?
7. How does Jesus bring restoration and refreshing to us? What can we do to help bring restoration to others?