

Time to Wake Up! Restoration Is Now!

November 27, 2022

First Sunday of Advent

Scriptures: Romans 13:11-14

Romans 13:11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ...

Sermon

Good morning and welcome to the first Sunday of Advent.

Advent means “coming”; it is an active season. The primary actor of course is God. God initiates the action by fulfilling the promises of old - the promise of Emmanuel, that God is with us! The longing of ancient hearts, “Come, O Come Emmanuel!” is realized by being born into full human form, and born into the very real world of viruses, poverty, homelessness, and imperial sponsored violence. But that very real created world has its share of actions and reactions as this redemptive story plays out in dramatic events that include visits by angel, forced pilgrimages, homelessness, spontaneous songs of joy, and harrowing life and death escapes.

And we too, today, are active as we continue to long for the light to break through, seek hope and try to patch together a very broken world. During literally our darkest and coldest days of the year, various little rag-tag groups around the world are trying as best we can to hang onto the promises of God -- as together we cry out for our own restoration, as we watch intently for signs of God’s restoring justice occurring around us, and as we seek to join in the restorative work that all of creation is in such desperate need of.

Specifically on this First Sunday of Advent we are confronted with the need to Keep alert! After all the world needs more “lerts!” But we actually need to expect restoration to happen! Some of us may recall what was once referred to as the three “R’s” of education; reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic. In Advent we come face to face with the three “R’s” of Emmanuel’s coming: redemption, renewal and restoration. We embrace the paradox that Christ is coming, but that Christ is also here. Waiting and receiving, just as the world always has - the busting forth of Divine incarnation into our dark world. And when we really do expect restoration, we then actually begin to live as redeemed, renewed, and restored people.

This Advent we will focus in on “restoration.” The word, “restoration,” lends itself to many images. You may be drawn to the image of artwork or furniture restoration. Since I like to

refinish furniture, that is the image that initially came to my mind and the reason why we have pieces of an ugly old chair piled up front here this morning. Maybe an old building or a rundown farmhouse, once again hosting life, is an image that makes sense for you.

Restoration also happens in our bodies when we heal from injury, or when we stop pumping it full of harmful chemicals as we recover our full senses and come into our true selves. Restoration happens when our communities handle conflict well and promote justice. Restoration can happen in relationships between people; it can also happen between us and God.

Our world longs for restoration, and God acts to bring it about. Fundamentally, restoration is a process: it is a labor that happens over time through both God's effort and with our participation. These exact pieces of chair you see here, I might add, have been in this condition and have migrated around our garage since we first moved to Ft Collins over 16 years ago. I guess sometimes full restoration can take years, maybe even entire lifetimes, to be completed?

Restoration is a process of renewal: bringing back to newness that what has been broken, damaged, or worn out. Restoration is sometimes a process of assembly: bringing different pieces together as they should be to create a beautiful whole. Restoration is a process of transformation: sometimes the restored object needs to be overhauled or rebuilt to be fully restored. Restoration can include a process of sorting: removing what no longer serves and reorganizing or refreshing what remains. Restoration is certainly a creative process: reimagining wholeness in a messy situation, creating something that was not there before. Restoration often requires outside action: we participate in the process, but it is God who is our restorer, the one to whom Psalm 80 is addressed: *"Restore us, O God: let your face shine, so that we may be saved."*

But as the Apostle Paul reminds us, we do know what time it is. *"The night is far gone, the day is near. It's time to wake up, get up, and get moving!* There is no shortage of "bad" in this world, but what we really need are more folks committed to doing and being good!

Waking up to "The coming day" is an important theme in the season of Advent and in this year's scriptures in particular. I guess you could say that Biblical people are the original "woke" folks! Advent is all about timing, but not timing merely in the linear, ticking of the clock or the measuring of days, months, and years. Advent time is about being in sync with God's plan and God's timing, which is measured out in eternity.

The classical Advent scriptures speak in this language of time: what has been foretold, what is about to take place, and what is finally occurring, happens simultaneously in the future as well as in the present and in the past tense. Experiencing the passage of time through Advent and then at Christmas is important, because we too, long for God to act just as we have seen God act in the past, and as we witness God actions right here and now.

Also during this season, consider how this element of "God's timing" might become more visible not only in your daily activities but in the larger life of the church as well. This is why I

will be including a “context question” each week for you to ponder during the rest of the week.

This week consider this question: Where is your community earnestly longing for restoration? What is your role in that context of brokenness?

Maybe you can light a candle or find a sunny spot and sit quietly as you contemplate this question? Maybe you too can find a piece of furniture or an old garment in need of repair (perhaps restoring an old house might be a bit too much?). Or better yet, find a bad habit or even a broken relationship to begin to restore this season of Advent? And keep in mind what I said at the beginning of my sermon this morning: *“by expecting restoration, we then actually begin to live as redeemed, renewed and restored people.*

Let me end this morning with a prayer:

Restoring God, we bring our broken pieces to you, longing for your restoration. We hear your call to us: to strengthen our hearts and to hope in you. Come to us as you have promised. Reveal yourself in your Word and in our worship of you this season. Restore us. Show us your Spirit, and give us courage to join in the journey with joy and love. Amen.

The Advent Theme and some of the content of this sermon are from the "Leader Magazine" which is published by Mennonite Media.