First United Methodist Church

Springboro, Ohio

Rev. Dr. Suzanne Allen

July 19, 2015

Series: ***Restoration In Progress***

Scripture: Luke 1:46-56, Luke 2:1-7

Message: “Restoration Song”

In our current worship series, “Restoration in Progress,” we are comparing our lives to a house that is being restored as a way of visualizing and thinking about the transforming power of God in our lives.

Our lives are often like the houses we have been seeing on Rehab Addict. These homes have been built by master architects and builders but have gotten run down and worn out over time. Their beauty has been covered up by time, dirt, and bad taste.

This week as I was previewing clips from the show, I came across one where thieves had broken in to the beautiful old tudor style mansion that the host was restoring and had stolen all of the leaded glass in the dining room. It reminded me of our lives and how Jesus says in John 10 that the thief comes to kill, steal, and destroy, but he has come so that we might have life and have it abundantly. Jesus has come so that our lives might be restored.

Today we’re also thinking about the coming of Jesus as we celebrate Christmas in July. His coming is the beginning of the restoration of God’s Kingdom on earth as in heaven. The prophets in the Old Testament foretold its coming. They gave voice to God and God’s people as they longed for a different way of being, for God’s way of peace, justice, and righteousness.

As that little babe in a manger was born, God incarnate, in the flesh, the restoration began. We are still in a time of waiting and working for all to be restored—the restoration is in progress.

Mary understood what was happening. As she received the news from the angel, said yes, and was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, she saw the vision of what was happening. She caught a glimpse of what the restoration would be like and she puts it into the beautiful song we call the Magnificat.

It is not a song of her son becoming a warrior king and taking over the throne of Israel. Instead it is a song praising the work of God and proclaiming the fulfillment of the words of the prophets.

So let’s take a few minutes to think about Mary’s song, its components, and how they line up with the house of our lives.

The first section of this song is filled with joyful gratitude. She says, “My soul glorifies God. My spirit rejoices. For God has noticed even me, just an ordinary poor young woman.”

Her joy comes from her vision. She sees God working in ways that are wonderful. She realizes that if God has chosen her, then the time has truly begun when each person is chosen to bear God to the world. Everything is changing.

And so despite her own discomfort, Joseph threatening to divorce her, the heartache she would have as she watched her son be rejected, betrayed and crucified, she claimed the joy of being a part of God’s amazing restoration work. She said yes to it beginning, growing within her. It was hard work, scary work, and yet the most important work she could ever be a part of.

Restoration work is the same for all of us. And when we give ourselves to God, trusting that God is sees us, knows us, and is working in us and through us to restore all of creation, we too have that same joy and excited anticipation about what is possible.

The next section is about the work that has to be done to live out this exciting vision of the restoration. It is not easy work. Walls have to come down. Things often have to get worse before they get better. This is the work of making everything level. In a house, the key to restoration is to make everything level and square. Over time things shift and sink and raise up. If things aren’t level and square, there are problems. Doors don’t swing shut. New windows don’t fit. Eggs roll down the countertops and crash onto the floor. There are gaps along the drywall at the ceiling or floor that allow room for critters and drafts to get in. When things are level and square, it makes a huge difference in a house.

This is true with our lives as well. Sometimes there are situations within us and our relationships, our jobs, our way of thinking and acting that get out of balance. They are no longer level or square. And of course one thing affects the next. If certain relationships are suffering, or we’re working too much, or we’re not feeling well or getting enough rest, just one of these can affect the others negatively. Restoration in our lives means working with God to get things back to level and square so that things don’t start popping out, rolling off, and crashing.

It’s true in our world too, isn’t it? We’ve all noticed how we tend as people to swing from one extreme to the other. Don’t we long for a balance, common sense in the midst of under or over reaction? We find it hard to keep things level and square. There are the haves and the have nots, the givers and the takers, the right and the left, the intolerant and the overtolerant. We long for that which is level and square.

Mary’s song celebrates that in God’s restoration of our lives and our world, God does a lot of work to make things level. Those who are full of pride will learn humility. Those who are lowly will be lifted up. Those who are hungry will be filled. Those who are stuffed will be instructed to fast.

Now some might immediately jump to extremes. Instead of making things level, they switch the weight to the other side like a teeter totter. But then you still have the same problems.

Restoration is about learning a new way. God’s way. It’s about creating places that are level and square so that life can thrive for all, so that the Kingdom of God can be built. It’s about saying no to some things so we can say yes to others. It’s about accepting some challenges for a greater good.

Mission trips help us with this. They are a great leveler. We learn how much we have and how much we have to share. We are pushed out of our comfort zones. We see the world from a different perspective. We realize how much we can learn from those we are serving.

We’ve heard the stories from the youth. They remind us of Mary’s song, the joy, the excitement, the hard work of restoration.

Our episode from Rehab Addict today is also about giving back to the community. It’s about those who have the power, influence and resources humbling themselves and serving. It’s about the humble being lifted up and give the resources they need to thrive. Let’s watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLNZABR6E1w> (edited down to approx. 4 min for worship)

Can’t you feel the joy that Mary was singing about? Can you see God working behind the scenes? Have you caught that same vision of how God is calling you to the work of restoration? The most wonderful thing is that even as we help to restore the world, God uses that to help restore our joy and hope. Thanks be to God!