First United Methodist Church of Springboro

Rev. Dr. Suzanne Allen

August 16, 2015

Series: Restoration in Progress

Message: Restoring the Kingdom

Scripture: Luke 10:1-9, 25-27

In worship this summer, we have been talking about God’s amazing power to restore our lives—internally, externally, spiritually and emotionally. God restores us through the grace of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. Even as we are being restored, God sends us out into the world to be part of his restoration of all of creation.

That’s what our scripture reading for today is about. Even early on in his ministry, when they still don’t clearly ‘get it,’ Jesus sends his disciples out—72 of them—to do this work. He tells them to “go ahead of him, to every town and place.” Did you catch that? They were to go ahead of him.

I think this is a powerful reminder that Jesus is the restorer. We are the preparers. Through our lives and our actions, we witness to what is possible when God restores our lives. We help others get ready for the work that God can do in their lives.

If you’ve ever done any sort of home improvement project, even painting you know that getting everything ready is a huge part of the work. If you could just walk in and start painting, it goes so much faster. But clearing things off the walls, taking off the faceplates, cleaning the walls, getting the paint and the painting supplies take a huge amount of the time.

God is restoring the world, Jesus tells us. God’s Kingdom is all around us. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” God’s work of restoring this world to its true Kingdom nature will be even more effective and efficient when we help with the preparation.

Jesus enlists us as those who have experienced God’s restoring power to help. Are we willing to say yes to doing our part in helping God restore the world?

It’s easy look around the world and see how much needs to be done. It’s easy to lament and get overwhelmed and even give up on God because it’s not happening at the pace we’d like. But Jesus reminds us that if we would help with the preparation, the restoration would go a lot faster. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

We’ve been using images from the HGTV series Rehab Addict to help us visualize what restoration looks like. Now if you think about restoring the city of Detroit, even just that one city, it might get overwhelming. It might even seem hopeless with no jobs and poverty and crime.

But you just start. You keep your purpose and your mission in mind. You don’t let the critics or the cynics or the underminers on the inside or the outside get you down, you just get started and do what you’ve been called to. And that faith that you can make a difference, even a small one, generates energy and joy and enthusiasm that is contagious. We’ve seen over the last few weeks how the neighborhood rallies and is so enthusiastic when Nicole Curtis begins a project there.

There are lots of ups and downs when you’re preparing for God’s restoration, even when you step out in faith. So Jesus says, before you get started on this, find a buddy. Use the buddy system. We all remember the buddy system from grade school or scouts. You have a buddy so that you can watch out for each other, so that you can help each other, so that you can hold each other accountable and encourage each other. And having a buddy makes the whole process so much more fun.

So where is your mission field? Where is God sending you? Is it at your workplace or school? Is it in your family or a place completely outside of your comfort zone and routine? Is it to a certain group of people like the elderly or teens or the homeless?

And who is your buddy who is called to this same area or who would go with you? Who could you ask to help you stay focused, to encourage you, to help you? If you’re not sure, Jesus says, “ask the Lord of the harvest,” trusting that he will provide.

Go together and as you do, do these things, Jesus says.

First, go in peace. Whoever you’re going to, whether they are like you or not like you, whether they are friends or enemies, go in peace and extend God’s peace to them. Don’t go in anger. Don’t go in judgment with an “I’ll fix them mindset.” Don’t do with assumptions. Simply go into the situation with peace and extend peace.

Go to them in the way that Jesus comes to us. The peace of Christ prepares the way for us to be restored by God. When someone comes to you in peace, you know you can trust them. You are safe with them. And that opens up possibilities for God to work.

What would it be like if we were intentional about sharing the peace of Christ with each person we encountered throughout the day? We might find that the world is our mission field and the harvest is ripe around us.

Second, Jesus says, even as you go with a buddy and offer God’s peace, practice hospitality. Not giving hospitality, but receiving it. Interesting. We go thinking we are the ones giving, fixing, etc. But Jesus says, receive hospitality. Hospitality builds relationships and opens us to the ones we’re going out to. Receiving hospitality lets the giver know that they are valued, that they have something to give.

So as you go out to your life mission field this week, what if you ask in each relationship and about each person you encounter, how can I receive hospitality from them today? How can I be a grace-filled receiver…of a story, a moment, a stick of gum?

First, offer peace, and then receive hospitality. And then, offer hope. Heal the sick, do the work of the Kingdom that needs done. Tell them and show them that God’s Kingdom is near.

Hope is a powerful thing. We all have that deep need in the midst of the daily grind and the storms of life to hear hope, to hear that God is near. You are not alone. God’s Kingdom is near. There is another way, the Kingdom way. It is around us and within us if we choose to see and hear and be a part of it. It is the way of healing and hope, of gratitude and humility, and blessing.

Even when things seem hopeless, plant seeds of hope. How can you do this week to speak and live those words of hope? How can you help those around you experience the hope of God’s Kingdom restoration?

That’s what our video clip is about today. There is a situation in one of the neighborhoods that Nicole Curtis is working in that was sad. One of the beautiful old shade trees fell down. Let’s watch and see how she takes that situation and turns it into an opportunity to offer hope.

<http://videos.hgtv.com/video/inspiring-tree-stump-carving-0217688>

Today, this week, I invite you to see the world around you as God’s Kingdom, waiting to be restored. To know that the work will go faster if we get in there and help prepare people for God’s transforming, restoring work. In invite you to think about those places that are close to home and those that are past your comfort zone that God is calling you to as your mission field, to find a buddy, and to go to those places, offering God’s peace, accepting hospitality, and planting seeds of hope.