First United Methodist Church

Springboro, Ohio

Rev. Dr. Suzanne Allen

July 26, 2015

Series: ***Restoration In Progress***

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8, Mark 2:13-17

Message: “Authentically Restored”

 Mothers are well known to say, “If everyone else jumped off a bridge, would you do it too?”

 It’s a way a reminding us to think for ourselves, to use the brain that God has given us. And in reality, what everyone else is doing is not always or often the best or the smartest or the healthiest thing to do. Usually, even though it might seem like it at the time, not everyone is doing it. It just seems like it.

 And so later you think back and say thank you mom for sharing your wisdom, or at least trying. You know the scars you have or just missed from following the crowd.

 Mom said it that way. St. Paul as he writes to the Romans puts it this way, “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In other words, don’t try to be just like everyone else, be the amazing, unique, beautiful, talented person God made you to be.

 God made you a living dwelling for his Spirit. Why would you hide that, cover it up, be ashamed of it in order to be like Mike, or Ike, or whoever is popular at the time?

 But we’ve all been there, haven’t we? Probably more recently than we’d like to admit. We all know the feeling and the answers to the why we would follow the crowd off that bridge:

 First, there is a lot of comfort in feeling like we are like everyone else, in not standing out for good or bad. And of course, if we’re different, there is that huge worry that we might miss out on something. Everyone else has that experience, good or bad, to talk about. We didn’t. And then there’s the lazy factor. Sometimes it is easier to go with the crowd because surely someone’s done their research and thought this through. If that many people are doing it, it can’t be a bad idea, right? They must know more than we do about it.

 We’re in the midst of our series, “Restoration in Progress.” It’s about the fact that God is in the restoration business. When we come to faith, God begins to restore the beautiful, good image of God within us. And then, as God is restoring us, we join in God’s work of restoring the world.

 We’re using clips from the HGTV series ***Rehab Addict*** to give us a visual for this transformation that happens through faith. It helps us think about the before and after and what it takes to get there. Today’s clip that we’re going to watch is called, “Avoid Trendy Materials.”

 One of the key things in restoring a house is to do so authentically. You want to understand and know the details of the particular style and period that house was built in and restore it with materials and colors that are authentic to the time and style. If you do, that restoration will endure over time. If you don’t, not only will you get some odd combinations, but it won’t endure. The minute that current style changes, you are back to renovating. Renovating changes with the whims of the culture. Restoration endures.

 I think there is a lot of spiritual wisdom in this idea. Let’s watch our clip and think about what “avoiding trendy materials’ can mean when it comes to our spiritual life as we think about not being conformed but transformed.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2a2wt7iTks>

 Because of our faith and the restoration that is happening within us and through us, we have a different approach to life. It is evident in these three areas where we have that tendency to want to conform to the trends of the day. We let the words of St. Paul guide us.

 And so, instead of finding comfort in being like everyone else, we find comfort in knowing that we are God’s beloved child. We trust God’s wisdom in creating us. We value the beauty and strength and gifts that God has given us. If God created us like an old farmhouse, we trust the beauty and purpose and strength in that. If we’re a little ranch or a Victorian painted lady or a tri-level in the suburbs or an ultra-modern beach house, we trust the builder and we work with God so that we embody all of the best parts of who we are called and created to be rather than covering them up or putting them down while envying the gifts of another.

 There’s nothing more powerful than someone who is authentic. That has a deep integrity because they trust their creator and accept, grow, and share their God given gifts.

 Next, instead of rushing around making ourselves crazy because we don’t want to be the only one who missed out on whatever the latest fad, vacation destination, opportunity, gadget, as we are authentically restored by God, transformed, we gain a different perspective on time, experience, and stuff. We realize that we can’t do it all. And not only that, but when we try, it’s not good for us. There is a lot out there that is good, or at least not bad, but at some point, it’s too much. Part of our faith is learning to say no. Think about the fishy bathroom. You might like fish. Those might be your favorite colors. But they don’t work with the style and the era of the house. So you say no to them.

 Our world bombards us with the myth that more is better. We should eat more, exercise more, work more, be entertained more, buy more things. But we end up anxious, insecure and exhausted.

 As Christians who do not conform, but who are transformed, we learn to appreciate the simple gifts of each day, of the place we are, the people we are with. We learn to focus on the blessings and to see how God is working in our lives, layering even the ordinary things with holiness. We appreciate a peaceful afternoon of warm sunshine, fresh vegetables, time with family and friends.

 Finally, we often conform because we get a little lazy. It seems easier to take the short cuts, to go along with the crowd. It’s easier to get caught up in emotions and opinions rather than thinking things through. But Paul tells us that restoration begins with the renewing of our mind. We have to think things through.

 There have been several articles trending over the last week on how easy it is these days to spread false information. There is more information out there, and often we don’t fact check. It’s easier to assume that they know more than us and to not think it through for ourselves. We get on board and continue to spread the false information. The one I liked the best was the one that said you could lose weight if you ate German chocolate while you were dieting.

 It’s harder to think things through, to do the research, to practice prayer and discernment around a topic, to do the hard work of using our minds rather than just our emotions in a relationship. But when we do, it makes such a difference. It reminds me of John Wesley’s practice of using scripture, reason, tradition, and experience as he considered any situation.

 Often what we think is easy now is often harder in the end when we rush into things and do not think them through. We make a mess and then we have to go back in and fix things. One of the most important lines in restoration, in any kind of construction is “measure twice, cut once.” It’s a slow process. But not having a board that is too short is worse.

 Thinking it through, using our minds, is part of the restoration process. And there is a lot of joy in solving a good challenge, of using our minds. There’s a lot of joy in working with God in the hard work of restoration.

 This is the difference that our faith makes. We are being authentically restored by a God who loves us and who isn’t trying to renovate us or change us to make us like someone else, but who is restoring the best in us. So let us rejoice in this work that God is doing within us, and let us commit ourselves again to partnering with God not to renovate, but to restore the world in Jesus’ name.