

Christ is Risen!... One thing that I often hear in conversations is, “When things go back to normal...” Someone might say, “When things go back to normal, I’ll finally go on that trip to Europe I’ve been meaning to do.” “When things go back to normal, I’ll get tickets to my favorite band to see them in concert!” “When things go back to normal, I’ll finally go to my favorite buffet.”

We as a society are waiting for things to be restored to normal. We want things to go back to the way things were. This doesn’t just happen during a pandemic. Maybe we feel this way if we have a major surgery such as a knee replacement, or something breaks at our house and we’re calling a contractor to do repairs.

But if you think about it, there’s a lot going on when someone says they want to restore something. First, restore needs a standard. You need a definition of “normal.” If I were tasked with restoring an antique loom, that would be a disaster because I don’t know how a loom works in the first place. Second, restore implies broken. Nobody says they’re going to restore their brand-new car because it should already be in mint condition. Third, restore needs a game plan. A 90-year-old may really wish he could get back to running shape and run an 8 minute mile, but modern medicine has not found a way to do that yet. Fourth, restore has a finished product. The “normal” after the pandemic will probably not be the same as if COVID-19 never swept our country. A restored building from the 1800s is still going to have indoor plumbing and electricity, even if the original building didn’t. Restore is still going to look different.

And so in the book of Acts, Peter preaches of a time of refreshing which looks forward to a time of restoration. **CHRIST IS RISEN TO RESTORE.** The Easter season is a time to reflect on the restoration and renewal that is brought about by Christ’s resurrection. Let’s go through those four aspects of restoration. First, I. Restore needs a standard. I think God has given us an intuitive sense about the way things should be. We know what excellence is. We know what health is. We know what fairness is. We can tell beautiful weather from crummy.

Beyond just our internal sense of how things should be, the Lord gives us a picture of how things were. He has given us the standard of perfection. God created creation to be good. We read this in the first few chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1:31 reads, “**And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**”

God created mankind, Adam and Eve, to live in a perfect world in the Garden of Eden. There was no sin. There was no violence, no death, no wars. There was no sickness, no disabilities, and no pandemics. There were no tornadoes, no earthquakes, no natural disasters. There was no anger, no fighting, no selfish actions. I’m sorry, doctors. I’m sorry, policemen. I’m sorry, funeral home directors. There were no need of your services.

God gives us this perfect picture in the beginning, but it doesn't stay that way. Adam and Eve sinned, they disobeyed God's command and ate the forbidden fruit off of the tree, and humanity was thrown into chaos ever since. Which brings us to our second point, II. Restore implies broken.

The context of our account is that Peter heals a beggar who cannot walk. The brokenness was staring Peter and John as they walked to the Temple mount. In the very same location that Peter and John followed Jesus, a beggar who from birth could not walk was laid before them.

There's all sorts of broken situations in our lives. Maybe it could be something like crossing paths with a beggar who is disabled—that kind of thing still happens today. Maybe it's a disability or ailment that we've faced for years: joint pain, cancer, or some other chronic condition. Maybe it's something that's a bit more subtle: an anxiety disorder, depression, or some other malady.

I could open a web browser and read the latest news headlines. I could give you a count of worldwide COVID deaths. I could give you an earful about the different problems going on in my neighborhood, and all of those would be fair game to talk about in the category of brokenness.

But the thing that is most pertinent for us today is this: we are sinned against, and we sin against others. That is the human condition. That is your condition. We are born with original sin, which is the sin we inherited from our forefathers, and even our best attempts to fix the problem only make things worse.

Third, III. Restore needs a game plan. Restore asks, "How are you going to actually fix the problem?" For some projects this can be easy. Restoring a classic car may be labor intensive, but there is usually a set number of steps to follow before you reach your goal. What game plan do you have for restoring humanity?

Smart people have had their theories to put humpty dumpty back together again. Often they boil down to each thinker's "would just." Marx said if the workers "would just" seize the means of production, there would be a return to paradise. Other religions say that if people "would just" follow these simple rules, we can create a utopia. Politics today, when taken to its extreme, claims if voters "would just" vote for the right set of policies or politicians, we could create heaven on earth.

Perhaps we could insert our own "would just"s. "If only people would just take COVID seriously." "If only people would just stop overreacting to it." "If only fathers would just stop abandoning their families." "If only people would just pick up after their dogs!"

To be certain, your "would just" may have a validity and could legitimately make our world a better place, but all these efforts will ultimately fail to achieve their goal unless we first understand who the great restorer is.

Peter gets straight to the point in his sermon, **“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.”**

Our “would just”’s sent Jesus to the cross. Our attempts to restore creation and to fix our own brokenness led us to kill the author of life and save a murderer. We cannot save ourselves in our state of sin. Mankind in its natural state is tossed out of Eden and the cherubim still stands at the gate with its flaming sword.

But the beauty of God’s game plan is that in this act of mankind’s destruction of the Author of Life, the Father was still restoring creation to itself. The most heinous act of destruction from a broken world is redeemed into the most beautiful act of restoration.

The resurrection of Jesus is the start of the restoration of creation. It’s the inauguration of a new era where Jesus is working to bring creation back to the former glory of Eden. And God wants us to be part of this plan.

Peter preaches, **“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,”** And so believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Trust in Him to take on all your brokenness. Trust in Him to be the one who will restore things to their proper place. Trust in Him to forgive your sins. Lay all your “would just”’s on Him.

Because lastly, IV. Restore has a finished product. As Christians we confess “I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” God has a finished product in mind.

In the New Testament we see hints of this, **“the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”** Peter and John’s ministry in Acts is simply a continuation of this ministry of Jesus. Jesus Christ risen from the dead is a sneak peek at this finished product. What happened to Jesus will also happen to us. We will rise again with sinless, incorruptible bodies that are restored from being broken.

Now we wait **“...until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”** The final restoration will come when Jesus comes again, but we need not wait with fear or apprehension because we know that the Lord is already working in our lives to guide us and protect us by His Word and Sacrament.

Don’t just settle for a return to normal. Rejoice that CHRIST IS RISEN TO RESTORE even as you know the best is yet to come as Christ raises you also.