

A Reimagined Church

“A Restorative Church”

Our God is a restorer.

Psalm 23 says the Lord restores our soul.

The prophet **Joel** says God will restore the years, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, the locust, and the palmerworm have destroyed and eaten up.

There are three major steps, with minor components that lead us to restoration.

Forgiveness releases us from the offense. The church practices and talks a lot about forgiveness. At church, there are lots of confessions in the West asking for forgiveness of the sins of the previous generations.

Reconciliation brings together opposing forces and takes steps to come together. The church in the West has done a lot of events, including communion, foot washing, and public confession of the sins of the past to bring reconciliation.

Restitution repairs the damage that was done. The church in the West has done little to do restitution and make repairs to the damages that have been done and are currently being done to the marginalized, the least of these and the stranger or immigrant.

A **Restorative** church will practice forgiveness, reconciliation, and restitution.

According to **Nehemiah 5** in the day when, Nehemiah had repaired and rebuilt the walls, there was a need for restitution of damage that was done by officials and by the nobles.

KJV Nehemiah 5:11-12 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. ¹² Then said they, We will **restore** them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

After we have been justified, are there additional steps needed?

Does God say anything about repairing damages to people, communities, and groups?

Part of repentance is bringing forth evidence or fruit consistent with a change in heart.

KJV Luke 3:8-14 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ⁹ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ¹⁰ **And the people asked** him, saying, What shall we do then? ¹¹ He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. ¹² **Then came also publicans** to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? ¹³ And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. ¹⁴ **And the soldiers** likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said

unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

Repentance is always seen in our actions, not just in our words.

The people were commanded to be generous and share. Vs 10

The public officials were commanded not to exploit the people. Vs 12

The soldiers were commanded to stop doing violence and stop making false accusations. Vs 14

□When peacekeepers become violators of the law it produces chaos in the community.

□When the guardians become warriors in the community it produces fear in the community.

To move towards a more just and fair community we must hear and act.

Exodus 22:1-14 explains principles of restorative justice in the community which brings peace, and shalom to the community.

I

Intentional offense and damage needed to be restored.

To restore means to bring back to or put back into a former or original state.

Exodus 22:1-4 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall **restore five** oxen for an ox, and **four** sheep for a sheep. ² If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he

die, there shall no blood be shed for him. ³ If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full **restitution**; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall **restore double**.

All theft is painful and a violation of our person.

Intentional damage calls for restoration plus penalties.

☐ Restoration brings peace, shalom to the soul and enhances the worship experience.

II

Random harm and damage needed to be repaired.

To repair means to restore by replacing a part or putting together what is torn or broken.

Exodus 22:5 If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of **the best** of his own field, and of **the best** of his own vineyard, shall he make **restitution**.

There are damages which are unintended.

☐ Repairing what is randomly damaged brings peace, shalom to the soul and enhances the worship experience.

III

Accidental damage and destruction needed restitution.

Restitution means making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury.

Exodus 22:6 If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make **restitution**.

A spark can kindle a big fire and do serious damage.

At times damage to others is accidental.

Accidents are still ***painful***.

□ Restitution brings peace, shalom to the soul and enhances the worship experience.

“Reparations have been done historically for European Jews, coming out of concentration camps, Japanese Americans, and German Americans, who were put in internment camps in the west, and Native Americans, when the United States broke treaties with and kept moving them and confiscating their land.”

□ What would happen if the church became a restorative community that practices forgiveness, reconciliation, restitution, and reparations for damages done over the years?

“Blessed are the ***peacemakers*** so they shall be called the children of God.”

I believe the church can be instrumental, in bringing shalom, and the community:

Restore!

Rethink! The church
Repair! The church
Reimagine! The church

Let's go home and restore the church to who it was designed to be!

Bishop La Fayette Scales
Network of Local Churches
Leadership Summit
Friday, August 9, 2024
7:00 p.m.