

(Let's Pray) It is a given that when you work with children, things are bound to get broken. However, the Montessori setting is quite different than a typical preschool setting. The materials in a Montessori classroom are very similar to what children would find in their homes. So many of the works are made of glass and other materials that are bound to break easily. The classroom that I work in has only one area that is covered with carpet and the rest is laminate flooring. So, I bet you can imagine where I am going with this. (Picture slide) One day I had a little girl come up to me and ask me a question, "Mrs. Wilbert, Do you think your husband can fix this? It fell on the floor and broke." I told her I would see if he could. Her response, "I am certain he can! He is the glue master!" You see, Rob didn't realize that when I started working at Montessori that he would become so proficient at gluing thanks to my students.

But it was her response that floored me and caused me to pause. It made me stop and think. This is where this sermon started to form. An innocent little phrase spoken by a preschooler who was confident that Rob could fix a material piece so that the work could be placed back on the shelf. Her calling Rob the glue master made me wonder about God as our glue master and our master restorer here on earth. Now I will admit that I have a usual way I like to preach. As I was preparing for this message, I was trying to prepare the same way as I usually do. However, God tends to take us out of our comfort zones and stretch us. And that is exactly what he has done with me. So today we are going on an exploration throughout Scripture to see how God is the ultimate Glue master and restorer of His people.

Let's turn to Ezekiel 36: 24-27. ²⁴ **“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will**

sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. God is providing a picture here of restoration not just physical but spiritual for his people. This is done by giving them a new heart and a new spirit. He promised Israel's restoration. It just might not be what the people thought it might look like. The final restoration comes through the work of Christ on the cross. He was the promised Messiah of God's people. His work on the cross allowed for the Holy Spirit to come and indwell in the hearts of his people. Through the cross the ultimate restoration project of God's people began its final chapter. So, let's look at some ways God restored his people throughout Scripture.

God restores family relationships. For instance, look at Joseph and his brothers. Joseph bragged about his dreams and his father favored him over the other 11. So, they beat him, sold him into slavery and lied that he was killed. Meanwhile, Joseph experienced hardship in Egypt and was imprisoned. But through his faith and dependence on God, he ended up working his way up to second in command in the greatest nation in that day during a famine of all things. So, can you imagine the scene when Joseph's 11 brothers come to him during the famine asking HIM for food? (picture slide) They did not realize it was even him. He could have really gotten even with them, which he did a little, but restoration did happen, and the nation of Israel continued to be blessed and grow because of Joseph's faithfulness. **Genesis 50:19-20 "But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm**

me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Speaking of Israel! What can be said about how many times God restored them throughout the Old Testament would take more than one sermon and the time I have here today. After Joseph and even Moses when he led them out of Egypt into the wilderness, they still had their moments. They ended up on a vicious cycle that seemed to continue throughout the entire Old Testament as it led up to God's redeeming plan of the New Testament. They would follow God really well and then stall out. One example was the golden calf. **(picture slide)** They begged Aaron to make them an idol to worship because Moses was taking too long on the mountain with God. Moses interceded for the people and saved them from the wrath of God. This can be found in Exodus 32:19-35. I read an article that talked about Israel's complaining, it listed at least 14 times in Scriptures that the nation grumbled against God. My favorite part of the article was when it said, "*After complaining 5 times God begins to take out His belt!*" Even though consequences started to happen, Moses interceded for the people to hold back God's full wrath. Even after rebellion, God still took care of Israel and lead them.

Now I want to journey back into Ezekiel into one of my favorite passages of restoration. That is Ezekiel 37 and the valley of dry Bones. This vivid picture of restoration is a beautiful illustration of God's power to heal the brokenness that we experience here on earth. **Ezekiel 37 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many**

bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live? “I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath^[a] enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.¹¹ Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ ¹² Therefore prophecy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

Notice how that even though the bones came together, and the bodies formed full bodies they were still incomplete. They were not fully complete until the breath, Hebrew word, **ruach**, of God was in them. This was how Israel was for years dried up and without hope. They have dealt with silence from God and being ruled by foreign nations. But hope was coming in the most unexpected way. God's plan of restoration was like anything Israel expected or had seen before.

God's plan now takes us into the New Testament to Jesus who came as an infant to a backwater town to the lowest of shepherds. He grew up in Nazareth as a carpenter's son and nothing really good comes out of there. He traveled with a rag tag band of misfits and went around and healed people and spoke God's truth. Along the way he made some followers, friends, and enemies. He also restored people in many different ways. Matthew 8: 5-13: **⁵ When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."⁷ Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"⁸ The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be**

weeping and gnashing of teeth.”¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

The servant was restored just by the faith of his master. Jesus commends the centurion on his faith. The centurion is considered an outsider in the Jewish world. He was a foreign occupier and a Gentile. However, **Jesus’** pointing out his faith shows how manmade barriers are being broken down.

He also taught restoration in his parable of the lost sheep which was our reading for today. **Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:1-7)** The restoration of that one lost sheep or as Jesus also says one sinner is so joyous that it is worth celebrating. It is for the whole body to gather and celebrate together because the whole fold is restored. Jesus’ teaching was so different from the religious leaders of the day. It would baffle people to leave 99 sheep behind to look for the one. However, to God and to the shepherd, that 1 sheep/person was important. Restoration of the whole fold or a person, is worth the celebration.

So, what does God's restoration look like in our lives? A couple images came to mind when I thought of the idea of restoration. A **stain glass window** which is made up of pieces and parts of different colored glass put together to make up a picture or just to make a window. Light still can shine through the pieces. However, sometimes the light can be hindered by the solder that binds the glass pieces together. We are sometimes like those stain glass windows in our lives. God's light can shine through certain restored pieces and parts of our lives but what about those solder parts.

Back in April, the kids and I attend a concert with my mom. We saw TobyMac, Crowder, Terrain, Cain and Cochern and Co. in Pittsburgh. It was Fosters and Elizabeth's first concert. Part of this sermon also came from that concert. One of the songs from Cochern and Co is called Stained Glass Window. The chorus goes along with what I just talked about. It says, **here's my broken pieces, All my incompleteness, Take this shattered heart, And make a work of art, Won't You show me, Jesus, What Your love can do, Like a stained glass window, I want to feel Your light shine through**

Sometimes we just get subtle glimpses of restoration. The **work in progress** signs may be up all around as a warning. We still have caution tape up around certain areas in our lives. Now it might seem that God has already done work in that area, and you thought he was finished. Rebreaking can happen in areas where God has already done restoration work. We have noticed this happening with some of the works that Rob has glued. Unfortunately, once an object is broken, the object is now weaker than what it was before it was broken. So now it can be broken easier than before. This can be

similar to us as well. A broken bone if it does not heal right can easily be broken again because it is weak. Another way is when our trust is broken by someone, do we have trouble trusting that person again because they have broken that trust before? Can you think of other ways that we are still works in progress when it comes to restoration?

Finally, God's restoration here on Earth is **INCOMPLETE**. It is like a puzzle that you put finally get all put together, but you realize that you are missing that final piece. It is completely frustrating. In our household we love **puzzles**. We are usually meticulous about where we place pieces, so we know that we have all the pieces. We usually like to frame our puzzles, so we need to make sure we have all the pieces. Last year we did a puzzle and were so close to finishing it and would not you know it.... we lost the last piece. So that puzzle never got framed because it was not fully completed. Like that puzzle we will never be fully restored here on earth. Due to sin and brokenness, we will never experience God's full restoration. **One day** we will though. It will be when Jesus comes back again or when our days are through on this earth. We will get to experience it fully.

To close today, I want to end with another song from the band Cochern and Co. It will be our closing song and benediction. It fully sums up my message and I don't want to distract from its message. Remember that prayer corner is available after service if your heart has been touched and need someone to pray with you. So, I will pray to end my message and allow the song to close our service. Have a blessed rest of your day.