

# CHARLTON CHURCH WEEKLY SERMON

Sunday, February 28

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## “40 Days of Restoration”

Genesis 6:11-14/ 7:17-19/ 8:6,17-21

As part of our many moments as a married couple, my wife and I really enjoy restoring furniture that has lost its commercial value. I can say that restoring is an art because this involves taking the time to see every detail of what you want to repair. Many times, it is sought that the object to be restored is precisely the same as the original. It is a new touch of creativity, giving new life to something that almost does not have it anymore. For example, a small old table chair transformed into something new and shiny.

The word restoration is not only related to furniture, buildings, and works of art; but to our life as well. The biblical meaning of the word "restoration" is to receive back more than has been lost to the point where the final state is greater than the original condition. The main point is that someone or something is improved beyond measure. This is a restoration that smells of new, of renovation. That is today's invitation to find the Restoration that God brings to our lives.

Today is our second stage in this series of Lent's sermons called "40." Last Sunday, our reflection took us to the "40" days of Jesus in the desert. Today, we are invited to reflect and meditate on another biblical moment, but in the Old Testament. This is the story of Noah and his family on the journey on the ark for 40 days. But what does this story bring us as a lesson for our lives?

Shortly after God placed human beings on earth, humanity quickly set out for self-destruction. Following Adam and Eve's example, who rejected God's instructions, humanity became progressively hostile and corrupt. In Noah's time, the text of Genesis 6: 5 says: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually." God observes with sadness his creation.

But, it is not only that; God, as creator, regrets creating humanity. The following two verses say: "And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings

I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

God looks sadly at his creation and realizes that humanity has strayed from the paths of good. If we remember the beginning of the creation story, "God saw everything that he had made and, in fact, it was very good." (Gen. 1:31) So what happened? Wasn't it a perfect creation?

God was not sorry for having made a mistake. God does not make mistakes. God gave his human creation the freedom to choose between good and evil, something we know theologically as "free will." God was saddened in his heart to see how far mankind had fallen from what was initially intended. Imagine how the author of a famous work of art would feel that his work has been damaged.

You may remember the case of an elderly lady who wanted, herself, to restore a painting. A fresco called "Ecce Homo" was painted by the 19th-century Spanish artist Elias Garcia Martinez. This piece of art was located in the church of the Sanctuary of Mercy in Borja, Spain. The elderly lady replaced almost all of Martinez's original brushstrokes. And Christ's Restoration of the woman went horribly wrong when she turned the detailed figure into what appears to be a featureless monster. Thank God that the painter was not alive, so imagine the impact on those who valued this piece of art. This masterpiece didn't even look like the original one.

Suppose we transform that idea to the experience of God with humanity. In that case, we will realize that the great masterpiece created no longer had the same value. It had glimpses of the original, but in its essence, it was no longer the same. With pain, God must destroy his creation and think of restoration of what was created. God gave humanity the time for that change, but it never came. Living in a corrupt society that refused to repent, only Noah favored God as a "righteous" person. We are told that Noah was moved by faith and "with holy fear prepared the ark in which his house would be saved" (Hebrews 11: 7). Because widespread violence prevailed in the world at that time, God decided to repopulate the world through this faithful man and his descendants (Genesis 6: 17-18).

We already know the biblical story; It was 40 days of rain, storm, and confinement. Until the day the dry land appeared again, and the doors and windows were opened. They opened to find no longer the same, but something restored, something new, something fresh, with a new spirit. And Noah built an altar to God. And God designated the rainbow

as a covenant sign that He would never again destroy all the inhabitants of the earth with a flood (Vv. 15-16). It sounds like the perfect ending of a story. So, I ask you now...

#### WHERE DOES FAITH MEET LIFE?

Friends, many of us might think that this restoration of the earth, made by God, needs to be touched up again with brushes of mercy and divine grace. We see how the words of Jesus are continually becoming more effective when he said: "Because from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19). Perhaps many of us are asking what is different between this world today and the one that Noah lived. Don't we have enough evil?

Remember that at the beginning we spoke that restoration is the action of putting something back in the state it used to have? God created us as a masterpiece of his creation. Psalm 8:5 says: "you made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor." God made us in his image and likeness. And I'm not talking about the physical part; I'm talking about the essence of what God is. God is love. And that love was revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Who died for each of us on the cross. That's what we're talking about, right? Of these 40 days of restoration that God invites us to live in this season of Lent.

Friends, do not let this restoration of your life be done by amateurs, as that elderly lady did with that fresco in Spain. That the only thing that will be achieved is to transform the beauty of God's essence in you into something that will have no value. However, let the Divine Creator touch your life with the brush of restoration to be genuinely a valuable representation of the essence of God – Love. It is that love that is offered to God, to your neighbors as yourself.

God not only called Noah to be an agent to restore humanity. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel rejoiced on the day of restoration, the day of the jubilee. This was a time of economic, civic, social, and religious restoration. The Christian jubilee seeks similar objectives. The Christian leaves everything to be renewed and restored by Christ, not just spiritually, but in all aspects of our lives. To be restored as a whole.

Friends, God can restore our lives during these 40 days of Lent. Therefore, let us pronounce the words of the Psalmist and say, "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved." (Psalm 80:3) – Amen.