

Restored

Isaiah 65:17-25

1. God wants to restore your broken past.

- Isaiah 65:16-17, 19

2. God will restore your broken dreams.

- Isaiah 65:20, 22

3. God restores your broken relationships.

- Isaiah 65:23-24; Ephesians 2:12-13; Romans 3:23, 5:1

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West Valley Church
Michael O'Neill
6/2/19

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We are continuing our series called "Restored," which we started on Easter and will conclude next Sunday for the day of Pentecost. Pentecost is a very significant day in the life of the church – as significant as Easter and Christmas, so I'm looking forward to next Sunday with you.

Last Sunday Shelly and I were in Colorado for Shelly's dad's 80th birthday gathering, and I'm really thankful that Pastor April was able to preach. She did a great job preaching on how God restores our love: because God loved us first, we can love! She's also doing a great job providing pastoral leadership as our Young Adult Pastor and also for our Guest Services ministry. We're glad she's on the team.

Today I want you to understand God's heart for you and for your restoration as he's revealed it in His Word through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Isaiah shows us a God who takes things that are broken and puts them back together again. Isaiah 65 shows us three areas of our lives where God promises to bring restoration. Let me give you a head's up: people read this passage and assume it's only talking about heaven, but it has as much to do with our lives today as it does heaven someday. It applies to what God wants to do for you *today*. The passage we are going to look at is about Jesus, and what he came to do in our lives in the present, not just in the future. Would you help me honor God's Word by standing as I read this to us? Here's what God says:

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness.

Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. No longer will babies die when only a few days old.

No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young!

In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards.

Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains.

They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune.

For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed. I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers!

The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!" (Isaiah 65:17-25, nlt)

Thank you; you can be seated. Remember as we get into this – even though it talks about heaven, it has to do with your life today, too!

Okay – if you haven't done so already, please take out your notes in your worship folder, or open the church app in your smart phone or tablet, and take notes. I want you to keep track with me on the three areas of our lives that God promises – promises! – to bring about restoration. First...

1. God wants to restore your *broken past*.

The greatest obstacle to happiness that many people face is not the present circumstances and it's not the uncertainty of the future; it's the impact and perceived reality of the past. Millions of people live miserable lives because they are haunted by something that happened many years ago. Maybe it was something they did that they regret. Maybe it was something they *didn't* do that they regret. Maybe it was something that happened to them or was done to them. Whatever it may be, the past has the power to keep us stuck and keep us from moving forward from some horrible things done to us or some event that happened, and has the power to destroy our lives. Hurtful words that were spoken decades ago bring new pain every time we remember them. Many marriages fail simply because people can't get past the past.

But thanks be to God who sent Jesus – and through him can break the power of the past and bring restoration to our lives. Let's look at verse sixteen again in that passage we read:

"I will put aside my anger and forget the evil of earlier days. Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore." (Isaiah 65:16-17, nlt)

I remember when I first became a Christian and began reading the Bible – I read it every night until I fell asleep, I'd read it first thing in the morning and then during breaks at school. And I remember how surprised I was the first time I read the letters of Peter. They were obviously written by a man who was confident in his role as a leader. And I remember thinking, "Is this the same guy that denied Christ three times, and the people he's writing to must've known about that. Isn't he embarrassed? Isn't he ashamed of his mistakes? How can he write with that kind of authority knowing how badly he messed up?" The reason Peter was able to make

such a comeback is because God restored Peter's broken past. Peter made mistakes – huge, colossal mistakes – and God restored him. And Peter isn't the only one, either. Paul had a past, and God restored him. David had a past, and God restored him. Moses had a past, and God restored him. Rahab had a past, and God restored her. Mary Magdalene had a past, and God restored her – I could go on and on, because the Bible (and Christian history!) is full of stories of those whose broken pasts have been restored by the power of God – my story is included in that, and so can yours be – that's what God does!!

I've had people say to me, "I've made a terrible mistake and now I will have to live with the memory of this for the rest of my life." And that's probably true; we very well may have to live with the consequences and the memories, but we *don't* have to live with the guilt and shame and bitterness and pain. That's why Jesus came to this earth. Isaiah says:

“...the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.” (Isaiah 65:19, nlt)

God will restore your broken past.

Secondly...

2. God will restore your ***broken dreams***.

Last week Pastor Roger led us in the “Memorial Roll” – a meaningful, meditative reflection on those we love in our church family who have passed away in the last year. Some of those deaths were expected, some were unexpectedly tragic, and yet all are terrible losses. Last week I was in Salem helping my parents deal with my mother's terminal cancer diagnosis. She's 81 but in very good health otherwise. Still, at her age there are more things that are terminal than not! But I will give you this update: Her cancer is inoperable – it is a 4.5-centimeter glioblastoma, the most angry and aggressive cancer. But, they discovered that hers has a DNA mutation that makes it more susceptible to respond to chemo. They can't cure it, but they may be able to arrest it, and if so, she could possibly have anywhere from 2 to as much as 10 years left. At least, that's what the specialist says. The oncologist disagrees with that prognosis, so they are arguing with each other. But what my mom said is right – she said, “It's really in God's hands anyway.” I'm bracing for that loss. I'm hoping for the best while at the same time I'm preparing for the worst.

But I can guarantee that all of us will experience some kind of loss in the year to come.

I can't help but wonder if a greater grief than losing what you had is losing what you will never have. I remember sitting in my very first class as a freshman in college. I was a ministry major, but I had only been a Christian for a year and a few months (remember I did not grow up in the church). The very first day of class, the professor was talking about how Christian education begins in the home, so he asked the students to share the things their parents did with them growing up to help them learn about Christ. The students talked about posters with Scripture hanging on the walls of their homes, about little plastic bread loaves with Scripture

cards in them. They talked about having family Bible times and praying together as a family. They talked about going camping over weekends and having worship around the campfire. I had no idea that people did those things; I'd never heard of anyone ever doing that. The more they talked, the more I realized how much I missed out on growing up, and what I would never, ever experience in my life. I began to weep and had to leave the class because I was grieving what I would never have. Thankfully my parents later professed faith in Christ, but I would never experience what all my Christian friends had just taken for granted.

Maybe you experienced some kind of loss – maybe it was a horrible loss that changed your life so much that it altered your future and you will never be the same. That's what broken dreams are. And that's something God understands, since Jesus came to this broken world. He has felt each and every loss we feel. And he doesn't just feel helplessly hurt, nor does he leave us feeling that way. He gives us hope:

“No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young!” (Isaiah 65:20, niv)

Death causes us to experience the pain of broken dreams, but God can restore our hope. He promises that death is not the end; it is the beginning. Because Jesus came to earth, lived, and then died, but then rose from the dead, death is no longer the end – death is no longer the great enemy and the ultimate end that is to be feared. Death is a *beginning*. With Jesus, broken dreams are only the beginning; Christmas is the *beginning* of the end, and Easter is the end of broken dreams, and Pentecost is the beginning of new dreams and visions!

By the way, broken dreams are caused not only by an untimely death, but also by an unfulfilled life. You might feel you haven't lived up to your potential, but God offers us hope here, too:

“No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat...” (Isaiah 65:22, nlt)

Do you ever feel like that? All your work just goes to someone else? All your dreams come up empty. Maybe your dreams have been broken by death, or maybe they've been broken by life and the things that have happened to you, but God can bring about restoration. That's what He does – He takes things that are broken and puts them back together again.

Notice, thirdly...

3. God restores your *broken relationships*.

This is a powerful promise. These broken relationships can be friendships and even broken families. Many children today are born into situations where, from a sociological standpoint, they don't have a chance. Because of economics, or drugs, or abuse, or ethnicity, or politics, or lack of education, or a myriad of things, some children seem destined to mirror the miserable lives their parents have suffered.

Families more than ever before seem to be falling apart (if they even started together). Even among those who manage to stay together, there are often such relational rifts that they might as well be strangers or even enemies. But it doesn't have to be that way. God has the power to restore family relationships when they turn to him.

When she turned 21, Tammy Harris from Roanoke, Virginia, began searching for her biological mother. After a year she had not succeeded. What she didn't know was that her mother, Joyce Schultz, had been trying to locate her for twenty years.

According to the Associated Press story, there was one more thing Tammy didn't know: her mother was one of her coworkers at the convenience store where she worked! One day Joyce overheard Tammy talking with another coworker about trying to find her mother. Soon they were comparing birth certificates. After several probing conversations and an exchange of birth certificates and baby photos, it became clear that mother and daughter had been working alongside each other for six months. When Tammy realized that the coworker she had known was, in fact, her mother, she fell into her arms. "We held for the longest time," Tammy said, "It was the best day of my life."¹

Isaiah said:

"They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them." (Isaiah 65:23, niv)

God loves to restore broken relationships. I've watched couples that have already been divorced, accept Christ and then begin to put their marriage back together. I've performed their "re-marriages," and in one, their seven year old daughter gave mommy to be remarried to daddy.

I used to do counseling in an office that had a sofa, and so many times I knew where the couple was at in their relationship by where the couple sat on that couch; if they sat together, that was a good sign. If one was at one end and the other at the middle, I knew who wanted to make it work. But many times, they would sit at opposite sides of that couch, nearly pushing with all their might against the arms as if they could stretch the couch to make them further apart from each other. But then I've watched as we've talked and prayed and they've confessed and forgave, that literally over time they would move closer and closer together, until they were sitting together holding hands.

The couple that I mentioned with the daughter was one of these amazing stories: one Saturday I was in the office when a man I didn't know called and said he was concerned for his ex-wife and that she needed counseling. I thought, "Yea I'm sure you think that." But I invited him to come in and talk and to bring his ex-wife if she would come. She did. They'd been divorced about a year. The story was that the ex-wife was living with another guy that treated her horribly.

¹ <https://www.apnews.com/54865c15168138bdd2c40810b7bd5a14>

A friend of hers who was in our church had invited her to church. She came but decided it wasn't for her, but she told her ex-husband that maybe he'd like it. So he attended one time, having never been to church. He accepted Christ. I had no idea that this had happened (by the way, you may never know what God is doing among us each Sunday!) Now this guy was a Christian and suddenly was concerned for his ex-wife's safety because she was living with a guy who was abusive to her. So I turned to her and I asked her what she thought. She said, "I think I need to accept Christ." So we prayed right there and she did. After saying "amen," I asked what she wanted to do now. She said, "I guess we should put our marriage back together." So they did. Six months later they were remarried in front of their church family, with their seven year-old daughter walking mommy down the aisle. They are still together today, over 15 years later.

God loves to restore broken relationships. But what do you do when you want to see the relationship restored but the other person doesn't? If that's the case, unless that person changes their heart and mind, God can't do anything about it. Still, even if the other person doesn't want to be restored, if *you* turn to God, he can restore to you a different relationship that will equal and surpass the broken one. God loves to restore broken relationships.

But in even deeper ways than that, God wants to restore our spiritual relationships. Isaiah said:

"...for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear." (Isaiah 65:23-24, niv)

God promises that the gap that exists between himself and people will be bridged – and our broken relationship with him will be restored. Since the days of Adam we have been separated from God, not only by Adam's sin, but by our own as well. God promised in Genesis 3:15 that this broken relationship would someday be restored; and that's exactly what was accomplished through Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote:

"At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:12-13, nkjv)

God promises our relationship with Him can be one of peace, fellowship, and blessing. Unfortunately, these are not the words that many people use to describe their relationship with God. Many people view a relationship with God as a source of guilt and judgment and unrealistic expectations with rules and institutions. But those lies come from your unfounded fear of God.

Everyone has experienced a broken relationship with God (Romans 3:23), but God offers us restoration through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. And he offers us peace in this world and with him. Again, Paul said:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1, niv)

Most of all, God restores our broken relationship with Him.

Prayer