

**Make it Right**  
**Isaiah 61:1-9, Matthew 10:32-42**

Well brothers and sisters, It is December 23<sup>rd</sup> and taking into account the remainder of today and tomorrow - there are about one and a half shopping days left until Christmas – so... are you ready? What preparations do you still need to get done?

Now we all know that getting ready for Christmas is a lot of work - but if you've ever had to get ready for Christmas while also trying to finish off a home renovation... well – as I can personally testify - that is exponentially more work.

You're not just decking the halls – you're patching and painting the halls, and hoping that everything will dry quick enough so that the decorations can go up without messing the paint job up.

But – that extra work is all worth it – again as I can personally testify, there is a great sense of satisfaction in sitting down and admiring the newly renovated and nicely decorated room

and enjoying the peaceful ambiance that has been created in anticipation of Christmas.

But again – as we have discovered in each of our advent themes thus far – there is an irony present here. It's ironic that we end up enjoying a sense of peace that was anything but peaceful in its creation.

My renovations were completed with not just the metaphorical blood, sweat and tears – but literal blood and sweat and... a few metaphorical tears of frustration, and the Peace that we are preparing ourselves with this morning in anticipation of Christ's first coming, as we come to the end of the advent season, that Peace was accomplished and brought about with literal blood, sweat and tears as Jesus Christ was born.

Now brothers and sisters this peace that we prepare with, this peace that is supposed to help us remember and celebrate Christ's first coming in order to grow in our anticipation of His second coming, this peace is best understood as Shalom.

Our modern day-to-day understanding of peace is simply an absence of conflict or interruptions, a time where nothing is bothering us or annoying us or preventing us from resting or relaxing.

And that isn't an incorrect understanding of peace – but it is a very limited understanding of what the bible speaks about as shalom.

The biblical definition of peace, or shalom is wholeness, completeness, it's when things have been made right, put back to the way it should have been, or brought about to the completion that has always been intended for it. Do you follow what I'm saying here?

I think the whole concept of renovations is a helpful one, to further explain the meaning and experience of Shalom and how it is part of preparing ourselves for the arrival of Christ.

It starts out with the understanding that God originally created this whole world, He build this creation and

everything in it - to be a renovation project for us, not as a fixer upper – but as a renovation in the sense of customizing and developing further.

It's like when someone buys a new house – now the walls are painted of course – but its builders paint... and the kitchen cabinets have decent knobs and hardware – but it's just standard spec right... nothing fancy or special, and it's the same thing with all the light fixtures and the trim and the baseboard.

It's all perfectly suitable for making the home livable and functional but homeowners will want to paint the rooms in various colors they choose, change out cabinet hardware and light fixtures and trim to match their style and decorations and so on...

That's one way we can understand what God did when He put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gave them the command to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Adam and Eve and their descendants were to start working on

developing and customizing – renovating - God’s good creation.

Now, that sounds wonderful right – but... we’ve all heard about renovation horror stories haven’t we...

Everything from homeowners who thought “I can install a new vanity cabinet and sink in my master bathroom, I can hook up the faucet! How hard can that be?” And they quickly discovered they were in waaaay over their heads... all the way to the shady contractor who overcharges and does substandard work and might even take your money and run leaving the job unfinished.

And that’s another way to understand how things went wrong with God’s plan for us to work on His creation to develop and customize it.

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to rebel and as a result sin warped and twisted human nature, and everything we do and

have done since then to customize and develop God’s creation is affected by this fall into sin in some way, shape or form.

Just like when homeowners ignore the fact that you can’t knock down structural walls in your home without damaging the house, or they disregard the safety codes for electrical work, furnaces and ventilation and such and put themselves and others in the home at risk - human beings are guilty of ignoring God’s Laws and designs and misusing and abusing His creation.

And just like some contractors cut corners on their work and scam their clients by not finishing job properly, leaving them with damaged homes and costly repairs – human beings are guilty of selfish behavior, injustice, and destroying relationships and lives.

It’s easy to summarize all our renovation faults and failings as human beings by saying that we have NOT loved the Yahweh our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Deut 6:5) and we have NOT loved our neighbor as ourselves. (Lev 19:18)

And it's easy to point out all the consequences of NOT Loving God and our neighbors in our own lives and our relationships and in our society and our world... they are, in many ways, as obvious as a botched renovation job.

But brothers and sisters – there is good news, help is on the way.

Just like Mike Holmes from HGTV's show Holmes on Homes comes to help people who have been scammed by shady contractors or fix the mistakes of the DIY Home owners whose efforts and good intentions are just not enough to get the job right – God had promised to send someone who can make things right in this world, who can restore things for God's people – who can bring about the vision of developing things to the way they were intended to be.

Someone is coming who can bring Shalom - Peace.

And the scripture passage we read from Isaiah this morning is kind of like a generic advertisement for a Mike Holmes TV

show – describing the help that is needed to make things right.

It might go something like *“Frustrated by your leaky roof, do you have trouble with your furnace or hot water heater, are your windows and doors drafty, have you started a project and gotten in way over your head... well – don't you worry, call 1-800-Makeitright and we'll send a qualified repair man over to make it right!”*

In the same way Isaiah is advertising the promised Messiah who is qualified to deal with what is wrong in the world and in our lives – and his qualification is *“the spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon [him] because Yahweh has anointed [him]”* (vs. 1) He is hand-picked and chosen for this.

And this Messiah can address all sorts of botched situations and problematic issues, if you turn with me to Isaiah 61 you can see the list of what He is qualified to fix; (vs. 1-3)

It says that He will: bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, and Yahweh's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. He can comfort all who mourn, and bestow on those who grieve; a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Brothers and sisters this is the work of making things right, of bringing about shalom and as we prepare ourselves for Christmas we would do well to reflect and identify the areas in our lives where we are brokenhearted, or poor, or in captivity as a prisoner of darkness.

Or where do we need to experience Yahweh's favor, what do we need to let go of and let Yahweh avenge for us? Are we mourning a loss or grieving for something that has gone wrong in our lives?

You see brothers and sisters the first step in preparing for the arrival of Christ, is identifying where we need Him to bring us Shalom.

Now the second step is to catch a bigger vision of what this Shalom, this wholeness and restoration will look like.

One of my favorite parts of any renovation show is when they show the renovation plans. They have these amazing 3D modeling programs and they give you a vision of how they are going to take a dark and dingy kitchen and turn it into something absolutely amazing and inspiring.

*"We're going to start by putting in base cabinets on this wall, adding new floor to ceiling cabinet on that wall. We're going to open up the entrance way and add a window over the sink to allow more natural light to come in. Then we'll install new tile floors and matching backsplash and new stainless steel appliances to give it that modern updated look."*

That's what the next part of Isaiah is describing in terms of what Shalom, this renovation, this wholeness is going to look like.

*"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. <sup>4</sup> They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. <sup>5</sup> Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards... and everlasting joy will be yours!"*

So brothers and sisters, have you caught a vision of shalom? Can you imagine yourself as sturdy as an oak tree in terms of always being righteous and faithful to God, so much so that your life being an example of God's splendor and grace and mercy!

And this vision is bigger than just yourself – when we catch the true biblical vision of Shalom it includes a vision for cities and societies; it includes other people who will find you a blessing

and want to work for you and bless you. In the bible, Shalom and restoration always includes relationships and community, it's never just about the individual.

Now, the rest of this passage is essentially Yahweh declaring that this He is the one who will be responsible for bringing about this Shalom - He says *"I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.... All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed."* (vs. 8-9)

This is just like Mike Holmes declares on his show that he is the one who has to fix the mess that someone else made and that he is going to be the one to roll up his sleeves get to work and make it right for the homeowners and they are going to be so happy with the results.

So, this is what Shalom is all about, and what it looks like coming into our lives and into our world as we find it presented to us in this passage from Isaiah.

And I pray that the Holy Spirit would help us catch this vision for Peace this morning so that as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth in just a couple of days – it would be the opportunity where we ask Jesus to bring that Shalom into our lives and relationships.

Now brothers and sisters – you might feel like this is adequate preparation in anticipation of the Peace that celebrating Jesus' birth brings.

However, to stay with the renovation theme, all we've done so far is just talk about what was botched and put forward a new vision for restoring it and acknowledged that it isn't going to be us who makes it right.

But there is additional preparation that needs to happen and anyone who has gone through a renovation knows that its fine to have plans but you need to be prepared for the reality of what it takes to bring that vision into existence.

And so in our second scripture reading this morning we have the Messiah himself who is advising us on what it will take to bring the vision of peace into reality – and this is where we encounter that irony that I was talking about earlier where the peace and calm and wholeness of the end product is brought about by a process that is anything but calm and peaceful.

I mean it's nice to sing Silent Night about baby Jesus sleeping in the manger and all – but in the hours leading up to that it was most certainly not silent as Mary was giving birth to the messiah.

Now, what Jesus is saying to his disciples and to us in Matthew 10 needs to be understood in two ways.

First as Yahweh's renovating work in Jesus Christ comes into our lives personally - and secondly also as we then understand how Jesus has recruited us to be a part of His renovation crew and sent us out into the world to "make it right" as a sign that he is coming back to make everything right, because in both

instances there is the temptation to disown and disassociate with Jesus.

It can be tempting to think that we don't need Jesus to renovate us, that we can take care of that work ourselves – we just need a bit more time, a bit more training, the right tools etc... and we can bring about Shalom on our own. So we refuse Jesus' salvation.

Or we are embarrassed or afraid to tell others that we are part of Jesus' renovation crew that has been sent out to make things right and offer to help fix things up in Jesus' name. You know a lot of other contractors don't like Mike Holmes – his standards are so high and he is so thorough in what he does that he makes others look bad in comparison, and it works the same way for us when we are followers of Jesus.

And what Jesus goes on say in this passage about him not bringing peace, but that he brings a sword instead and that people will not get along with members of their own family because of Him - is an acknowledgement that when people

really understand who Jesus is and what His vision of Shalom and restoration and Peace is truly about – they are either on board with Jesus or they are against Him.

And we tend to struggle this way with Jesus ourselves don't we – just like the homeowners on the renovation show who end up fighting with Mike Holmes about what he knows will be a good design and repair for their home.

They protest and object, but Mike is the expert and goes ahead anyways - and then in the end the homeowner is always won over and agrees that what was done was the right choice for the renovation.

It's the same in our lives as Jesus is changing us in what we believe and think and how we feel and act in every area of our lives.

Brothers and sisters I hope can you identify ways in which you have seen yourself change in this manner because of the work



Jesus is doing in your life? And I hope you can identify a before and after renovation picture of yourself that you could show.

The most notable transformation is when we start to put God first instead of ourselves, and when we are willing to take up the task that Jesus has assigned us on his renovation crew to Go Out and make things right. We become willing to put our own interests aside – and we take up our sledgehammer and work boots to follow Him.

Jesus is quite clear on this in this passage from Matthew – that anyone who does not take up their cross and follow Him is not worthy of Him; meaning that if you are not willing to join in hard work of Shalom-making in this world, it is quite questionable as to whether or not you have really experienced Jesus bringing His Shalom into your own life.

Now let me just briefly pause here for a moment and say that if you are feeling convicted about this – you have two choices; you can decide right now that you will do something to publically participate in Jesus' renovation work in this world

and you won't be afraid or ashamed to let others know that this how you are following Jesus.

Or - maybe you need to choose to let Jesus do some deeper renovation work in your life so that he can get down to the root of what needs to be fixed in order for you experience wholeness and peace – His Shalom and then you will be changed and you will take up your cross.

You see brothers and sisters Jesus doesn't just want to forgive our Sin – he also wants to break the power of Sin in our lives, which continues to prevent us from being fully restored, so if that's what the Holy Spirit is nudging you about this morning - let's talk and pray and do some reno work after the service this morning.

Now if you are taking up your cross to follow Jesus as part of His renovation crew then it important that understand that as we Go Out and encounter other people while we work at making things right - if they are people who oppose Jesus...

they will oppose what we are doing – even if they would do the same thing for only humanitarian reasons.

And if people love Jesus... then they will support what we are doing – even if all they are able to do is offer us a cup of cold water to help refresh us as we are digging in and doing the hard work and the heavy lifting.

And Jesus wants to us to know this so that we don't get distracted, discouraged – most importantly so that we don't switch our focus – because brothers and sisters the temptation for us as we are waiting for Jesus' second coming is that we become peace-keepers instead of shalom-makers.

We need to remember that renovation requires demolition, it makes a mess, it's not pleasant to live through it – it's actually quite inconvenient, and we often discover unexpected challenges or problems that need to be fixed and require us to adjust the plans, and it often takes longer to complete than we had expected... and all of this activity is not peace-keeping - but it is peace in the making.

So brothers and sisters as we prepare to celebrate the shalom, the wholeness, the restoration –the PEACE that Jesus Christ brings into this world at His birth may the Holy Spirit work through our remembrance to transform us from peace-keepers into peace-makers.

Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall see God. (Matt 5:9)

Christmas is here brothers and sisters - are you ready?

Amen.