

Rejoicing in Restraints

Assorted

(preached Pine Grove 8/9/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

At any given time in America, there are 2 to 3 million restraining orders in place.

Restraining orders are issued by courts to protect a person or business or entity from being harmed by another person.

Though they are frequently violated, restraining orders are successful 70% of the time according to a number of studies.

Therefore, judges continue to grant them in hope of restraining violence.

God is also interested in restraining violence.

In fact, God seeks to restrain sin, and He has sought to do that ever since sin was committed in the garden.

In fact, take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 3 for a moment and let's remind ourselves of the power of sin.

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

And at that moment, sin was unleashed into the world.

Now turn to Genesis 6, verse 5.

5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now understand hundreds of years had passed since the fall of Adam and Eve but sin quickly spread and gained control over the earth.

So God destroys the earth with a flood and starts over with 8 people.

Now flip to Genesis 11..

1 Now the whole earth [a]used the same language and [b]the same words. 2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and [c]settled there. 3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 They said, “Come, let

us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

It is about 100 years after the flood and what has already happened?

Sin is once again out of control on the earth and God must act again.

So what does he do?

He confuses the one world language and scatters the people all over the globe.

And the point of us going through these verses is to note the incredible power of sin.

Sin literally runs rampant.

Now understand, sin is never out of God's control but God allows sin to spread and grow.

Sin is out of control today.

It always has been but we are seeing that like never before in our own country.

We are seeing sin in the streets.

We are seeing in the government.

We are seeing sin in families.

And it bothers us as believers.

It upsets our desire to see people live rightly and obey the Lord.

So what do we do?

Well, part of my calling as a shepherd is to help the flock in whatever field they find themselves.

Whether the grass is green or brown or dead, the shepherd cares for the sheep, and I want to take some time on Sunday nights to do just that.

To help us first of understand the world around us, but also to help us live rightly and combat the spread of sin we see.

So we are going to spend some weeks looking at the world through a biblical lens.

And the point is not to highlight all the sin in the world and offer a commentary on it.

The point is to also help us as God's flock to fight the good fight.

To do what we can where we are.

Too many Christians have simply taken a seat in the stadium and made it their purpose in life to complain about everything around them while doing nothing to help.

The church has become the complainers instead of the problem solvers.

We have watched our team fall behind, but instead of getting in the game, we complain that the opponent is cheating.

Look, the enemy is cheating.

Unbelievers are cheating.

That's a given.

This is their nature, but our job is not to point out their fallenness but to be salt and light in the world.

Now understand, the world is on a collision course with God's wrath.

I am under no illusion that we can change that, but I also know that God would not have us sit on the sidelines watching Fox News instead of being in the fight.

So we are going to spend a few weeks figuring out how to live as we should in the midst of a world that is slowly burning.

And in the process, we are going to see why the world is crumbling and what we can do to keep it from falling all the more faster.

Now I am going to call this series of messages Rejoicing in Restraints.

And the reason I call it that is simple.

God knows the way of sin.

He is fully aware of how fast and furious sin spreads and then destroys.

So what has done to slow it spread and save some from its destruction?

Simple, God has instituted some restraints on sin.

And these 4 restraints are things that we should rejoice in as believers.

They are creations of God to keep the peace and allow the gospel to spread to those who need to hear it.

Sadly, many so called Christians have a wrong view of these restraints and even about them.

But this is not how it should be.

We should rejoice in these things and furthermore, we should honor these things in hopes of changing our culture.

Now let me introduce these 4 God-given restraints tonight, and we will talk about how they are being abused in the current climate.

The first restraint on sin that God has established to maintain order in society is the conscience.

I. Rejoicing in the Conscience

Turn to Romans 2 with me.

We are familiar with the conscience since we recently looked at Romans 2 on Sunday mornings but let's remind ourselves of what it is.

Romans 2:14-15

14 For when Gentiles who do not have [m]the Law do [n]instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having [o]the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

Though we will get into more details of the conscience next week, understand that the conscience is a gift from God to keep man from sin.

And note that everyone is born with a God given pure conscience.

What I mean by that is that the conscience is sensitive to right and wrong from a very early age.

For instance, you don't have to tell a 3 year old to go and hide when they hit their sister.

They go and hide because they know that anger and violence are wrong.

Going back to Genesis 3 for a moment, do you remember what Adam and Eve did after they ate the fruit?

They felt shame and went and hid from the presence of God.

Why did they do that?

Simple.

Their conscience alarmed them to trouble and disobedience with guilt over their sin.

This is how the conscience works.

It is an alarm system for sin, and it is designed by God to keep us from sin.

I picture it as a hot stove top.

You turn on the burner and it gets bright red to remind you to not touch it.

Now understand, the world around us is a result of people not responding to their conscience or worse yet, aligning their conscience with sin.

We will get more into this next week, but let me simply state that the world works to change our conscience.

And that assault on the conscience begins at a young age.

This is why boys today are told that it is okay to act like a girl.

Or girls today are told it is okay to act like a boy.

In fact, the world's favorite saying is to feel no shame over who you are.

This is why public school systems focus on self esteem and self worth.

They never speak of guilt or anything ever being wrong.

I was reading this week, and I kid you not.

That saying $2+2=4$ is upsetting to some kids so we need to show them that $2+2$ is not always equal to 4.

This was a real discussion on a real website among real teachers in real schools.

This is why inventive spelling is allowed because we don't want kids to feel bad for misspelling words.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg and it has been going on for decades.

And sadly parents join in on this nonsense and keep their kids guilt free and shame free, and now we have a generation of kids who feel no guilt and shame over anything.

They can walk into a city and destroy property and set fires and throw rocks at police and see nothing wrong with it.

In fact, they celebrate their sin.

Guilt and shame is the farthest thing from their mind.

And in case you think this is an isolated problem, I can assure that the assault on the conscience happens in the homes of Christians as well.

We will look at that next week.

The second restraint on sin that God has created is the family.

II. Rejoicing in the Family

If you let your minds go back to the book of Genesis again, God established the family before sin even entered the world.

He joined Adam and Eve together in marriage before the serpent ever tempted Eve to sin.

In fact, many have said that even though Eve sinned first, Adam is held responsible for her sin because he should have been with his wife when the serpent approached.

He was her God given restraint, so to speak.

But even after sin of Genesis 3, Adam and Eve grow their family in Genesis 4 with the births of Cain and Abel.

And let me simply say that the addition of children to a family restrain sin.

I am sure that you know of many a man and woman who sealed down after the birth of their children.

They may not have been believers but their lives were different after kids.

And why is that?

Well people will say that kids gave them a new sense of responsibility and purpose.

And that is God's design for family.

We are no longer the center of the universe.

We have to care for a spouse or for children and that restrains us from sinful things.

But on top of that, the family is a source of discipline in the lives of the next generation.

The family, particularly fathers, act as restraints on the next generation.

In the same way that the conscience uses guilt to restrain sin, the family uses the rod to restrain sin.

And this is God's way.

Sadly, the world has long rejected the rod of discipline.

Even believers have rejected the rod of discipline.

But worse yet, the world has rejected the idea of family.

Divorce has been the norm for decades.

Adultery has ruined many a home.

Now you add in homosexual marriage and gender identity issues, and the family is a wreck.

And the result is a generation of kids who were never given the rod in the home.

In fact, most were never disciplined at all, and so they reject anyone or anything who tries to restrain them now.

We may blame the schools.

WE may blame the politicians.

WE may blame the culture.

But the blame for the current generation falls at the doorstep of anyone who has not followed God's plan for one man and one woman for life raising their kids in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

WE will get more into what God says about the family in the weeks ahead.

But understand, when families fail, societies and nations fail.

It is truly amazing that our country still survives today in light of how the family has been destroyed in our culture.

And that is not even touching on the destruction of family seen in 60 million abortions in our country since 1973.

So believers should rejoice in the conscience and the family, but third, believers should also rejoice in the government.

III. Rejoicing in Government

Now this may sound like an odd thing to say considering the overreach of government today in the affairs of the church in regards to COVID 19.

But let me assure that government was designed by God to restrain sin.

In fact, Romans 13 says that the role of government is to reward good and punish evil.

Now understand, government would include the president all the way down to local police force and everyone in between.

And though government is made up of sinful men and women.

And though government is made up of people who aren't all Christian.

God uses government to accomplish His will in the world.

In fact, government has been given incredible authority by God in the world.

If the conscience of a person uses guilt and same to restrain evil, and the family uses the rod of discipline to restrain evil, government uses the weapon of the sword to restrain evil.

This is why capital punishment is biblical.

This is why governments have the authority to form armies and kill to save innocent lives.

This is why the police carry multiple weapons.

They have been given that authority by God.

Now understand, there can be and have been abuses of the sword by government.

But overall, society is stabilized by government.

And in case you don't believe me, take a Portland Oregon.

Take a look at Seattle Washington.

Take a look at Chicago Illinois and New York City.

430 murders in Chicago this year.

106 in July alone.

244 shootings in New York City in July 2020 but only 88 last July.

Not to mention Minneapolis Minnesota which looks like a war zone.

And even small areas of Atlanta Georgia.

And why all the surge of violence and crime and murder?

Because people are wanting to overthrow the police forces in those cities.

Because mayors of those cities are preventing the police from doing their jobs.

Long story short, defunding the police works against the plan of God in the world because it lessens a restraint on sin that God has ordained.

But let me also add that we as believers should be grateful for government.

We should submit to government as long as government doesn't force us to sin or prevent us from obeying.

We should honor government and pray for the salvation of those in government positions.

WE will talk more about that in coming weeks.

But let's get to the final restraint of sin that God has established, and that is simply the people of God in the world.

In our day, that is the church.

IV. Rejoicing in the Church

God has always used His people as a restraint on sin in the world.

In the OT, Israel lived by God's laws.

They ate God's diet.

They celebrated God's festivals.

They built God's temples and worshipped God's way.

And all of that was meant to draw the attention of the pagan nations around them to their God.

And now in this age after the 1st coming of Christ, the church has become the people of God.

We are not confined to one nation.

We are not eating a special diet of food or celebrating a series of festivals.

We aren't going to the temple.

Instead the church is spread among all the nations of the world.

And that is part of God's plan to use the church to restrain sin.

So how do we act as a restraint on sin?

Glad you asked.

Take your Bible and turn to Matthew 5.

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how [e]can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a [f]hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a [g]basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

In one of Jesus greatest sermons in Matthew 5, he speaks of the role of the believer in the world..

We are salt and light in the world.

Now we will spend some time looking at this idea in more detail in a few weeks, but let me simply say this.

Salt preserves and light exposes.

And this is the role of the church in restoring sin.

We preserve God's way of life.

We preserve society from slipping into moral wickedness.

We preserve the need to obey.

But we also expose sin.

We draw lines of right and wrong in the world.

We display a love of God.

We exhibit an allegiance to His Word.

We expose hypocrisy.

This is the church.

Or should I say this is how the church is supposed to function.

Sadly, the salt of many churches has lost its saltiness.

And what do I mean by that?

Well, many churches don't preserve anything.

Instead of preventing corruption and decay in the world, they contribute to it.

Additionally, many church's lights have gone out.

They don't expose sin.

In fact, they don't even talk about sin or worse yet, the commit the sins they should expose.

This is the sad state of the church.

We grieve and gripe about riots in the street, but at the same time, believers bear some responsibility in it as they are no longer salt and light in their communities.

We will talk more about this in coming weeks.

But the church is a great restraint on sin.

In fact, some of us were talking about the end times on Wednesday and I noted that the removal of the church from the world in the rapture will lead to one of the most evil periods in all of world history.

In fact, the removal of the church will allow the most evil man in history, - the Antichrist, to come on the world's stage and commit all sorts of evil.

The people of God serve many purposes in the world, but one of our purposes is to restrain sin.

And we will learn how to do that more effectively in the weeks ahead.

Let me end with a few thoughts.

Conclusion

I call this series of messages, Rejoicing in Restraints.

And this should be the mentality of the believer.

We should rejoice in the conscience.

WE should rejoice in the family, in the government, and in the church.

These things should be sources of joy in our lives.

They should be things we celebrate and endorse because these things were created by God to bring joy to his people but also to the world in general.

Please note that all these things are what the world is kicking against.

The conscience is under assault with a new morality that is not found in Scripture.

The family is under assault with a new family structure and promotion of abortion and homosexual marriage.

The government is under assault with calls to defund police and anarchy in the streets.

The protesters don't want justice because you can't get justice when there is no government structure.

And the church is under assault as well.

A virus that is being promoted for political reasons is being used to persecute and close churches while Christians watch and even encourage restitutions to be placed upon it in the name of safety.

I never thought I would see the day when believers would be happy with churches being closed, but this is what is happening.

On top of that, churches are being assaulted by the world in other ways as well.

So what we are going to over the next few weeks is take some time rejoicing in the restraints that God has set in place.

Because our celebration of these things pleases the Lord and does much to make us salt and light in the world.

Let us pray.