

Good morning to all those who breathe and have eternal life,

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 19:10 (MSG) – Larger reading: Luke 19:1-10

For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.

STORY: as told by Chuck Swindoll

A few years ago, an angry man rushed through the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam until he reached Rembrandt's famous painting "Nightwatch." Then he took out a knife and slashed it repeatedly before he could be stopped. A short time later, a distraught, hostile man slipped into St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome with a hammer and began to smash Michelangelo's beautiful sculpture The Pieta. Two cherished works of art were severely damaged. But what did officials do? Throw them out and forget about them? Absolutely not! Using the best experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision, they made every effort to restore the treasures.

By His sovereign grace, God can bring good out of our failures, and even out of our sins. J. Stuart Holden tells of an old Scottish mansion close to where he had his little summer home. The walls of one room were filled with sketches made by distinguished artists. The practice began after a pitcher of soda water was accidentally spilled on a freshly decorated wall and left an unsightly stain. At the time, a noted artist, Lord Landseer, was a guest in the house. One day when the family went out to the moors, he stayed behind. With a few masterful strokes of a piece of charcoal, that ugly spot became the outline of a beautiful waterfall, bordered by trees and wildlife. He turned that disfigured wall into one of his most successful depictions of Highland life.

OBSERVATION:

We have all seen them – a pile of rust missing the doors, hood, tires, engine, windshield and much more. We wouldn't give this discarded old automobile a second look let alone purchase it. Then the work of restoration begins. With a patient hand and lots of long hours a beautiful old car begins to emerge from that pile of rust. Eventually a prize winning antique automobile sits in a car show. We marvel at the before pictures. We are amazed at the step-by-step record of what had transpired to return the pile of rust to the beautiful vehicle that sits before us. Such is the power of restoration ... the work of a master's hand.

And so it goes in our lives. Plug-nickels are more valuable than us. We feel useless and discarded. We are ignored, discounted and dismissed ... and then the Master's hand begins the process of restoration, rebuilding us from the ground up ... lovingly returning us to God's created beauty.

No one is beyond hope. No one is so flawed that God cannot restore them. No one. Such is the power of God's mercy and grace. Such is the message of the advent of God into our world. Regardless of how dark it might seem presently, there is still hope. Regardless of how bad we might appear, there is still possibilities. Regardless of the horrible, mistake driven our life might actually be, there is greatness still within us.

Christmas is God's affirmation that he is still in the restoration business ... taking the likes of you and me and returning us back to our original state of created beauty. That is what he does! The finished results are wonderful to behold. Don't we all like the before and after pictures? Especially when a human life is at stake. Isn't that just like God! Sure makes for a merry time of life!

QUOTE:

"A lonely day is God's way of saying that he wants to spend some quality time with you." – Criss Jami

PRAYER:

Thank you for taking our pile of messed up life, a life filled with too many mistakes to count, and restoring us through Jesus Christ with love and grace to your original design.

Worship has been planned with you in mind. The sermon this week is "The Unreachable Dream" – Luke 3:3-6 ... pray that you and others will be touched by God's power and might ... that someone who feels lost in this world will realize that they are loved by the Almighty God.