

Coach House Church

BEACONS

RENOVATIONS

12TH NOVEMBER 2020

My mum once bought me a sign which is now hanging up in our hallway. It reads: My house was clean last week, sorry you missed it!

It is certainly true that there have been times when it is clean and tidy, but mostly it feels busy and a bit like painting the Forth Road Bridge – clear one bit then start again at the beginning. Even without the usual visitors, due to lockdown, we are always in the process of sorting out stuff. In the ideal world, nothing would be out of place, nothing would break or wear out. But then, I would rather it were busy and full of people than clean, tidy and devoid of life.

I do enjoy watching the house renovation programmes though. I can watch from a distance without the mess of plaster dust, paint pots and leaky pipes, then enjoy the unveiling of a fully renovated house, from the comfort of a cosy settee. My favourite has to be 'homes under the hammer' as it is all about bringing some unloved property back to life, with beautiful kitchens and bathrooms, and often a total transformation from its original state.

The bible tells us a lot about renovation and transformation. In the Old testament, the Israelites spend many years concerned that the temple and the city of Jerusalem is in a bad state of repair.

Nehemiah, an exile and the cup-bearer to the King took it to heart and asked for permission to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. Renovation was important. He wanted to honour God, re-creating the city walls as a sign of God's presence and power, of God's place with his people.

Yet, when you read about the prophet Ezekiel, God speaks directly to Ezekiel while he is still in exile, in Babylon. God was not confined to the temple, limited by city

walls. In Ezekiel 34, God promises to be a shepherd to his people Israel, bringing them home from exile, to a place where they belong.

So, the idea of home is important. It is a place of belonging. It is a place where the basic human needs are met: shelter and security, a place to wash, eat, sleep and relax.

Romans 12 tells us

13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Hospitality, entertaining, inviting people to your home is a way of connecting with people. Across cultures there is a common thread of building relationships of showing friendship and meeting needs, while having a drink or a meal.

1 Kings 6 describes how King Solomon built the temple for God and it took 20 years to complete such was his care and attention to detail. Read the chapter for yourself and imagine how it looked. This was a transformation of huge proportions - from a tent of meeting in the wilderness to a permanent solid temple structure - the home where the presence of God would live, in the inner sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was placed.

If it was on a TV series now it would probably be 'Grand Designs' as no expense is spared to create something of beauty. In Solomon's case, the purpose was to reflect the majesty and power of God. In verse 11 of chapter 6 there is a warning:

11 Then the Lord gave this message to Solomon: 12 "Concerning this Temple you are building, if you keep all my decrees and regulations and obey all my commands, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father, David. 13 I will live among the Israelites and will never abandon my people Israel.

The temple was not just about the great craftsmanship. It was much more. It was about reflecting God's values, of following the rules set out in the law and putting God first in everything, of recognising God as Sovereign and a place where the Spirit of God lived.

It is right and proper that Solomon's temple should be a grand design.

Yet, when you see the amount of money, time and attention to detail that some lavish on transforming their houses it does leave you with a feeling of the unnecessary, of putting too much emphasis on a building, on the here and now. Do they really need gold taps or a porcelain floor?

The bible tells us not to store up treasures on earth which I believe means not to put too much emphasis on what you have.

Matthew 6 says

19“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

During our present situation, I think many people have realised just how important it is to have contact with others, that relationships and interaction with people are essential parts of our lives. It is not all about the things we have, it is also about the quality of connections with others. Having the tidiest house with all the latest interior design statements does not replace human interaction.

In John 14 Jesus is responding to the disciples who are very confused with what is happening – where is Jesus going? Why does he need to leave them?

1“Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2There is more than enough room in my Father's home.^a If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?^b 3When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4And you know the way to where I am going.”

Think about these words in relation to the beginning of Jesus life. What a contrast. When his parents arrived in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were told there was no room in the inn and their only option was a stable, a barn with the animals. How different, as Jesus prepared to go back to heaven that he is describing a mansion, with limitless rooms, so that no-one needs to be left outside. All are welcome if they believe in Jesus and accept him as Saviour.

The transformation process can be startling when we see a building being brought back to life but the bible talks about individual lives being transformed, changed and improved for long term gain.

Romans 12:2 says Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

While the shell of a house can be renovated and transformed so that it can become more than bricks and mortar but a home....so we can put our trust in Jesus who helps us through his Holy Spirit to have a change of attitude and of values and of focus. We belong to God's house, as it says in Hebrews 3, if we put our

Hope and trust in Jesus as he is the one and only way to heaven's mansion and to be in the presence of a Holy God.



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