

Coach House Church **BEACONS**

G O D W I L L F I N I S H I T

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Have you ever started something and then a little later found yourself saying I wish I'd never started? I'm sure that this is familiar to a lot of us. I want to tell you about an instance where the job started looked far too big to complete, and the tools I had were not up to the task uncovered.

I'm Andy and many of you who are familiar with listening to the Beacons or keep in contact with the Coach House Church, through the various media platforms we operate, will know, that we have been using this current time, to renovate and improve the church building and grounds. In the main this has been done by myself and my trusty side kick, worship leader and creative maestro, Jamie

The other day a job was started that we knew was coming, but we knew nothing of what to expect. It involved a cooker extractor, a chimney and a lot of soot and rubble. It was one of those jobs where some way through, both Jamie and I looked at each other (through soot blackened faces) and said – I wish we'd never started! The truth is, we both knew that we had to complete the task, because we knew the problem existed...we knew it was an incomplete job. We couldn't just leave it. The problem however, was that for a while at least, the issue had not been seen. ... it was well hidden from view. Out of sight & out of mind you might say!

Let me explain.

When the cooker extractor had been fitted, it hadn't been done properly. There had been a chimney stack to vent into, so for a time, the unfinished job had not been seen to be troublesome, or even – unfinished. It worked , so that was the end

of it. We have all done it... taken the easy route, taken the short cut ... it's not what we should have done, but no-one will notice. Right? It's ok...until it goes wrong.

The decision had been taken at some point not to put the proper extraction pipe onto the hood – and maybe venting into the chimney stack was ok at the time until the chimney was removed! Yes folks! Another issue meant that at a later stage the chimney was taken away and with it, the means by which the extractor below was working. The original short cut was about to create a bigger, messier job.

Not only was the chimney removed, but rubble from this fell down the stack and now sat on top of the unprotected extractor hood! This meant that whenever we went to use the extractor, rather than removing smells from the kitchen, instead it deposited brick dust and soot into your pan of soup! Croutons and black pepper yes Soot and brick dust ... no thank you!

So the decision was taken, in this instance, to finish what someone else had started! So sometime later, we finished clearing the rubble from the chimney stack, obtain a bigger drill to put a core hole through from the outside, fitted the extraction pipe that should have been done in the first place and then put it all back together.

Now to anyone looking into the kitchen... nothing looks as though it has changed. The cooker looks the same, the outside of the extractor looks the same, but the it now operates as it should, it now does the job for which it was made. It took a lot of effort, some moving of dirt and rubble, some reworking and refitting, but it all now works.

So how is this applicable to us?

Well for one thing, I have noticed that when we ask God do do something, He finishes what He starts. All well and good we say until we realise that He doesn't take short cuts! God is making us perfect. It's what we're intended to be, it is what we are made to be, but our desire to hold control and dictate our own destinies can make the job a lot more painful, a lot longer than intended and a whole lot dirtier.

I am also conscious that we are the ones who like to take the short cuts – almost to try and help God out – although I strongly suspect it is so that we can keep hold of some of the things we didn't expect God to start tackling in the first place!

In his book 'Mere Christianity', C.S Lewis, writes
'those who put themselves in Gods hands will become perfect, as He is perfect – perfect in love, wisdom, joy, beauty and immortality...'

Being made perfect is an issue to us ... We have a hidden problem... and its name is Sin. We cannot deal with it, no matter how hard we try, but God can.. This is all well and good but when we let the work begin it tends to uncover a lot of stuff we might prefer to have kept buried!

We cannot ask God just to deal with the surface things, the things others might see, and not expect him to tackle the root of the problem, which is usually well hidden from everyone, including we assume...from God. We buy into the lie that we are in control and that we can cope with stuff as long as some of the other things are surrendered and taken away.

CS Lewis explains it like this and I am sure we can all agree: As a child he suffered with toothache. Now he could go to his mother for some painkillers to allow him to sleep, but he did not. Because he knew that although his mother would provide some pain relief, she would also do something else.... book him into the dentist where the deeper issue would be dealt with ... painfully!

CS Lewis also writes as if Jesus was saying this to us:
'whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever it costs ME, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect – until my Father can say without reservation, that He is well pleased with you, as He said He was well pleased with me...this I can and I will do....But I will not do anything less'

You see, it is all fine and well with us , until the final bit. If we ask Jesus to change us..He will, but He will not do a half job, He must finish what is started.

CS Lewis, takes his cue from the Bible. In Philippians, chapter 1 verse 6 the apostle Paul writes:

'And I am certain, that He who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished...'

Did you get the last bit? It is His work, not ours. This calls for surrender and trust – and that is where it can get a bit messy, a bit dirty and bit painful. But seeing the job completed is worth it.

Now Paul, if you know anything from the Bible, was once known as Saul, and his reputation for persecuting the believers in Jesus was legendary and yet, here he is telling believers in a church he helped to establish, that God is able to do a good work within them. How can Paul say this? how can CS Lewis say it? How can I say it, alongside millions of others? Because we have experienced it.

When we see the change in Pauls life, when I look back and see the change in my life – it gives us confidence that the work is underway.

Is it finished?... No. will the work be finished yes.

Is there any shortcuts that God will take with me when I surrender to his loving care? Absolutely not. It may be painful for us to see the job being completed, but it cost Jesus his life.....

The ability to see the bigger picture is always an advantage. And even if we don't have the full view (and I would argue that without being God, it is unlikely that we could), then we learn to trust the one who created us, who's intention for us was for us to be perfect. He who is able to finish His work.

We like to hide things from others and even ourselves, but God knows all things and He knows how to finish the work. Nothing is hidden from Him, or can be hidden from Him, so who are we kidding really?

I hope that the time that we have been able to spend together has helped to encourage and even challenge us.

There is nothing to big, nothing that cannot be forgiven, nothing that stops us coming to Jesus, that then allows the work to begin. God is the master builder, the Great Creator..... surely we can trust ourselves in His hands.

Ephesians 2 v 10 is one of my favourite lines.

'For we are Gods masterpiece. He has created us anew in Jesus'

Anew ... created again ... An Ongoing work

Finishing what we let Him start.

Lets pray.

Thank you Jesus, that You make a way for us to be made as we should be.
Thank you that by the Holy Spirit You transform us into Your likeness.
Help us to be brave enough to surrender fully, trust in Your love for us and rest in
Your grace and Mercy.
Finish the work we pray that we might bring honour and glory to Your name.

Amen



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