

Renovation Rescue

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 10th of October 2004.

The preacher is Steve Brown. His sermon is entitled Renovation Rescue and is based on Acts chapter 3.

Get these guys a chance to get to their seats and get their Bibles out. I'm actually going to apologise. I'm going to be quoting from the NIV, not the NRS visas.

You've got them in the pews. Because I just realised I had actually done this sermon before and I used the NIV that time. So it's pretty much the same story though. Let's pray.

God, we ask that you would empower us by your spirit to understand your words tonight. So that we may be changed and renewed and restored.

[1 : 32] Amen. Recently I saw a great new reality TV show. It was called Body Works. And the blurb for the show in a TV guide said this.

New series explores the latest fascinating and innovative cosmetic and plastic surgical procedures. When I first read that blurb I thought, well no, not another extreme makeover show.

People are just trying to look 21 again. But Body Works is really different. It's very different. In Body Works people get plastic surgery actually for good reasons. And you see some amazing transformations.

One guy in particular was called Trevor. Not our Trevor. But it was a guy called Trevor and he was especially interesting. You see, he was a lovely guy. And he'd been going on diets because he was very overweight.

And he'd lost so much weight that he had this excess skin that hung from his body. And as this guy was being interviewed and examined by the doctors in front of the cameras, you could see just how shy and how reserved and how nervous this young man had become.

[2 : 44] He'd lost all his confidence and he was desperate to be restored to his former self. And as I watched, my heart went out to him and I wanted to see this young man have some confidence again and to be happy and to be restored and be new again and whole.

There's something a bit special, I suppose, about seeing people restored to health. It's something that we just love to watch and applaud. But it's not just people, is it, that we like to see restored? Australians love watching all types of restoration shows, don't they? The block is all about restoring and making you a tired and old apartment block. It's fascinating watching your transformations and it's really cool each week as you see a new room emerge.

What about Backyard Blitz? It's great seeing a couple of shrubs, an old shed, a hill's hoist get transformed into an outdoor entertainment area with designer landscaping and outdoor furniture. Even that show, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy. It's all about transformations, isn't it? One minute you have this slob who loves to watch the cricket while he dumps his beer cans on the ground and the next you have a snag.

[3 : 59] Sensitive new age guy, you know? Ready to cook for his girlfriend, dress nicely, clean the house and watch Pride and Prejudice. It's nice to watch the transformation of these blokes, isn't it?

Well, if you don't spew first. There are lots of shows. There are lots of shows that are about restoration and making things brand new.

And you know what? I think God likes them. I think God really likes them because they're about restoration. They're about making old things new. They're about making broken things whole again and fixed.

And God likes that sort of stuff because God is in the business of restoration himself. And we see it here in Acts chapter 3. Verse 1. One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer about 3 in the afternoon.

Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

[5 : 12] Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, look at us. So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get some money from them. Then Peter said, silver or gold, I do not have.

But what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up. And instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognised him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

You see, if you think the transformations in Backyard Blitz, or Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, or The Block, or Body Works, are amazing and wonderful, then have a look at the restoration job that God does on this guy.

This is a major restoration job in comparison. It's amazing and it's wonderful. And it says that they're filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him.

[6 : 28] You see, this crippled guy had been crippled from birth. He'd never walked. He needed other people to carry him around. He'd never been able to work.

You see, all he was good for was being dumped at the gate with his hand out, asking, begging. He'd never gone into the temple to worship or pray or praise God like those people he begged from. He'd never done that. He'd never gone into the temple courts himself to worship and pray and praise God because he couldn't. He'd only ever been outside in the gate.

You see, under the law of Israel, he was not permitted to enter the temple courts. Cripples, people of physical deformity, were not able to come into the temple courts of God.

They weren't seen as whole people and weren't able to come into the presence of a wholesome God. They were imperfect in their body and had to remain outside the dwelling place of the perfect God.

[7 : 39] To be able to worship and pray to God in his courts, one needed to be ritualistically clean. To be able to come into God's presence in his temple, people needed to be whole physically, without blemish, with no defect, to come into the presence of God.

And it was just a reminder to the people that God is perfect and he can't be in the presence of something that isn't.

I think we find that really hard to understand in our society today because disabled people in our society are respected and they have access to almost everywhere today.

We design buildings so that they have wheelchair access. Disabled car parks are always closest to the entrance. Shopping centres. We have new buses that are built really low so that people who are disabled can get on and off easily.

But in Israel, if you're disabled, then bad luck. The best you could get was a couple of blokes to pick you up, drag you to the temple and drop you there. The temple itself wasn't disabled friendly.

[8 : 55] He couldn't go in. He couldn't enter because he wasn't whole. That was this guy's biggest need.

Wasn't it? You see, he wanted money. He just wanted to get by and survive. But he got something much more valuable that day. He got his wholeness restored and given back to him.

He was made physically pure again. Ritualistically clean. He got restored so that he could actually walk into the temple courts and worship his God. He got restored so that he could jump and dance and be excited because he's about to praise God in his temple courts.

He got restored so that there would be no barrier between him and God anymore. No defects to prevent him from going in to God's presence. He could experience God's love and his intimacy again.

No barriers between him and God. How amazing. It's so amazing that all the people rush over to see. It's so wonderful that they crowd around to see this miracle. It's so exciting.

[10 : 04] All the people recognise this guy as the crippled beggar who's been there for ages. But Peter the Apostle is a bit of a killjoy.

All Peter can say is in verse 11 he says this. While the beggar held on to Peter and John all the people were astonished and came running to them in a place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this he said to them men of Israel why does this surprise you? It's a strange thing to say. Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we made this man walk? Christopher Reeve used to be my favourite actor because he was the Man of Steel. He was Superman. And I love Superman. Tragically though about 10 years ago he fell off his horse and he became paralysed.

He's a quadriplegic unable to move his arms and his legs. He needs a machine to help him to breathe. The Man of Steel was just a man after all.

[11:14] It's really sad to see Christopher Reeve the man is still so tragically weak and feeble. It's really sad to know that he'll never walk again. And at the moment Christopher Reeve is advocating for human stem cell research so that people might be able to grow human tissue again and hopefully he can get better again.

He hopes that medicine will restore him. He desperately wants to be healed and made new again. But it's extremely unlikely. The best scientists, the best medical researchers in the world think it's impossible.

They say he has no hope. Now I don't know about you but I'd be shocked to see if he ever walked again. It'd be amazing, it'd be wonderful, it'd be exciting but there's no hope in his lifetime.

That's what the people in the temple thought too. They saw a man without hope walk into the temple. They saw a man without any hope being shut outside for all his life jump and dance with great excitement into the temple to praise his God.

How amazing and how wonderful and how exciting but what if the doctors 50 years ago in 1954 said in 50 years time by 2004 we'll be able to heal quadriplegics.

[12:39] By 2004 we'll have the technology to repair human tissue. By 2004 we'll be able to heal broken nerves and spines. By 2004 in 50 years time no one will be in a wheelchair.

And then 20 years ago 1984 the doctors come out again and they say by 2004 we'll heal quadriplegics. By 2004 we'll have the technology to repair human tissue and broken nerves and spines.

No one will be in a wheelchair in 2004. And then five years ago 1999 the doctors come out and announce we're on schedule 2004 we'll be able to heal quadriplegics.

We'll have the technology to heal to get human tissue to grow again. To heal broken nerves and spines and there will be no wheelchairs in 2004. You see if the doctors had said this I would expect Christopher Reeve to walk this year.

I would expect him to jump out of his wheelchair. I would expect him to breathe with his own lungs again. We wouldn't be so amazed would we? We'd just say well we knew he'd walk we were told 50 years ago 20 years ago 5 years ago.

[13:53] It wouldn't be so wonderful we would have been expecting Christopher to get up get off the respirator. It wouldn't be so exciting we'd think it was just normal.

You see that's what Peter's like. He thinks that this healing of the crippled beggar isn't that amazing really. It's not all that wonderful.

It definitely he definitely doesn't seem too excited about it. You see God had said that this type of healing would happen long ago.

God had been saying this for a long long time through his prophets in the Old Testament and ultimately through Jesus and no one in that temple should have been surprised. If they'd read their Old Testament they should have been expecting it to happen.

If they had been good temple goers they should have been praying for this time to come and to see these things happen in their temple. But they're blind. They're not expecting God to work in this amazing way.

[15:02] They haven't been listening or paying attention to God's restoration program. They're not with the program. And if you're not with the program you're against the program.

listen to what Peter says. The God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus.

You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate though he had decided to let him go. And get a load of this. You disowned the holy and righteous one and you asked that a murderer be released to you.

You killed the author of life but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus this man whom you see and know was made strong.

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him as you can all see.

[16:08] You see the people in the temple have a bigger problem than the crippled guy had. They are crippled in a different way. They are crippled in their hearts.

They are ritually unclean in their hearts which is even more severe than being out there and crippled unable to come into the temple. You see what they had done?

They didn't glorify Jesus God's servant. You see Jesus was a servant who would fulfil all the promises that was actually given to them through their father Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and they handed him over to be killed.

They disowned God's servant the servant even though he was innocent. They disowned the holy and righteous one. Those are titles for God. They disowned God by disowning his son and they swapped God for a murderer.

They murdered the author of life. They slayed the one who had actually brought them into existence and given them life. You see how the people in the temple have a bigger problem than the crippled guy.

[17:20] They're crippled in a different way. They're crippled in their hearts. They murdered God's servant. They murdered the one who came to fulfil all the promises given to them. They murdered the author of life, the holy one, the righteous one.

And the big question then is this. Who needs healing and restoration in this passage? Who really needs it? Who needs to be made whole again? Who needs to be made right with God?

Who needs to be made ritually clean so that they can actually enter the presence of God to worship and praise him? Yes, it's the crippled man.

But even more so, it's everyone who doesn't have faith in Jesus. They have crippled hearts. It's everyone who has blood on their hands. For all of us have sent Jesus to his death because of our sin.

It's everyone who's disowned the servant of God. We've all been ashamed to call him our Lord. Everyone, all of us, need restoration.

[18:29] You might be thinking, it's a bit harsh. It's a bit full on. I mean, I don't think I've done these things or I was ignorant.

Besides, most people don't really realise that they need to follow Jesus. They don't realise they're in that predicament. They're ignorant. It's not their fault. But Peter anticipates that response.

Look at verse 17. Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all his prophets, saying that the Christ would suffer. Repent then and turn to God so your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send Christ, who has been appointed for you, yes, even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time of God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. I love McDonald's.

[19:33] There's my confession for the night. Every Monday morning I drive to Ridley College. I get up a little bit earlier because I want to get to Macca's before I get to college, so that I can get my egg and sausage McMuffin, my hash brown, and my orange juice.

And I wish that I just didn't, I wish I knew that it wasn't so fattening. I wish I could just go to Brunswick Macca's, buy it, buy all that fat food in just ignorant bliss.

But even if I could, the consequences wouldn't change. They'd be the same. You see, ignorant bliss doesn't stop my heart disease. Ignorant bliss doesn't stop me putting on weight.

Ignorant bliss, well, doesn't stop me from having clogged arteries. You see, ignorant bliss doesn't stop God's judgment on those people who ignore God's servant.

Ignorant bliss doesn't stop God's judgment on you and me for trying to rule our own lives, by trying to implement our own program for our own lives.

[20:42] Today, if you're in the same boat as those in the temple, if you've ignored God's servant, if you've acted in ignorance towards God's servant, Jesus, if you're acting in ignorance by not having faith in him, but rather in yourself, trusting your own program for your own life, if you're acting in ignorance by trying to run your life without God's restoration program, if you've done that, and this passage says ignorance is not bliss.

God will judge. God will not accept us into his presence if our hearts are unclean. Physical imperfections aren't an issue for God, it's our hearts that matter. And if our hearts are wrong, if they're dirty, we'll be shut outside, just like that cripple was to begin with.

Ignorance is not bliss. And it's not bliss because God has told everyone about his servant in advance. God has told everyone about his restoration plan in advance.

For Israel, he sent the prophets over and over and over and over again to tell them that they didn't get it. And for us today, he sent his servants, the prophets, over and over and over again so that we would get it, but often we don't.

[22 : 18] For us today, he speaks through his gospel, through the New Testament, about Jesus and his life that he lived on earth and what he did for us. For us today, he speaks through his Holy Spirit.

For us today, he speaks through his church, through his people, about his restoration plan.

Ignorance is not bliss because we have blood on our hands.

And we need to look at this crippled guy and we need to say that we need our hearts restored. We need restoration and healing.

We need to be made whole again to come into God's presence. And the way we do that is quite simple, which is great news. Peter says, repent then and turn to God so that your sins will be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord and that he may send Christ who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

If you've never done that before, then I invite you to do that. If you know that you need restoration in your life, if you want to experience times of refreshing in your life, then I invite you to do what the passage says.

[23 : 45] Repent. That simply means just fessing up to all the rubbish that you have in your life. Be honest with yourself and then turn to God. That simply means trust in Jesus, the one he sent, his servant, the one who died for your sins so that they could be taken away and believe in his resurrection and in the power it has to scoop you up and give you resurrection life too.

See, like the cripple, you need to be healed in the name of Jesus. Like the cripple, you need to be able to enter God's presence and dance and praise God forever.

no barriers. If you haven't done that before ever, I encourage you to do that tonight. What about the rest of us?

Those people who are here who have done that before? You know, you've been a Christian for a while now perhaps. What about the rest of us here at Holy Trinity? Do we need restoration?

Do we need to be made whole again? Do we need healing to happen in this church perhaps? and in our relationships? Because I don't think that this message is just for those who are outside God's church.

[25 : 07] Peter was speaking to those inside the temple as well. He was speaking to those who were active members in Israel's worship of God.

He was speaking to those who were the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To those who had the promises of God given to them. And he addresses them as brothers, fellow brothers.

You see in a sense he's preaching to the converted. Almost. This message tonight is for all of us.

For those of us who have repented and turned to Christ already in our lives, this message is for you too.

Because it's not only about those who are outside and need to come in, it's for those who are already inside God, but they need their hearts restored and cleansed again and renovated again.

You see, repenting and turning to God isn't just a once-off event. It's a process in our lives. It goes on. It's a continual process in the church. Because if we see repentance and turning towards God as something that happened once-off in the past, Christ, then you'll end up being like the people in that temple.

[26 : 28] You'll think that you no longer have need for someone to die for your sins or to rise into life for you. You'll start to live life like those people in the temple, doing your religious duty rather than being a Christian out of joy.

it'll become a duty rather than joy. Turning up to church each Sunday, singing the songs if we must, giving the spare change out of our pocket when we should be given the first fruits of our labour, just doing enough to get by as a Christian so we might feel good on Monday.

How boring, how terrible to live like that. It must be just the biggest pain in the butt to drag ourselves to church if we feel like that.

When we're like that, we've become just like those people in the temple, religion out of a sense of duty, no vitality, no life in it, just a crippled Christian existence.

can I ask some serious questions to those who have been Christians for a time now? Are you experiencing life to the full?

[27 : 58] Or is your Christian life a bit dull? Are you experiencing continual healing and restoration in your life? Or are you stagnated in your backsliding?

Are you close to Jesus, close to the author of life, or does life just feel unscripted at the moment all over the place? Are you coming into the presence of God like that cripple did, dancing and singing for joy as you do, or would you rather flick the TV on?

Are you praying to God with joy in your hearts as you do it? Or is your prayer life non-existent?

Are you reading the word of God, praising him for the great teaching that you're getting and the excitement that you see in the pages as the spirit reveals it to you? Or is it sitting up there on the shelf?

Are you coming to church, dancing and leaping in your heart, expecting to see God work and God speak? Or are you checking your watch?

[29 : 07] Every couple of minutes thinking, gee, can't wait till we get out of here. Tonight, if you want to experience joy, that joy again of believing in the author of life, Jesus Christ, if you want to experience again times of refreshing in your life, then I invite you to repent and turn to God.

God. Because when you do that, you will experience times of refreshing and healing and restoration and excitement and going ahead in your Christian life.

Repent then and turn to God so your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord and that he may send Christ who has been appointed for you, even Jesus. It's hopeful, isn't it?

I want to experience that. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. You see, when we repent and we turn to God, we are beckoning Christ's return.

Our little personal restoration in our own lives points to the ultimate final restoration that will come when Jesus comes. Our restoration within the congregation here, of our relationships and in this church is just a point to the ultimate final restoration that we have in Jesus when he comes back.

[30 : 43] When I see people become Christians for the first time, my response is, come Lord Jesus. It points to him coming back and restoring everything. It fills me with such joy.

And when I see Christians get excited, including myself, about their faith, and they start talking about it and they start turning up to church excited and they start praying and reading their scriptures, it's a sign that Jesus is coming back soon.

I want to encourage you to experience that truly and real. if tonight has impacted you and you'd like to talk about that stuff, I would love to have a chat with you afterwards in the room in there and I'd love to talk to you and maybe pray with you if you'd like that.

So if it's impacted you, if you've become a Christian for the first time in your heart tonight and you've really understood it and you think you want to be restored to God through Jesus, I'd love to have a chat to you about that.

If you've been a Christian for ages and you've done that a hundred times but you've done it again tonight, again I'd love to talk to you and pray with you about it. Thank you.