

Testimony - 19th March 2023

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 March 2023

Preacher: Claire Brown

[0 : 00] Well, it's been quite a long time. As I said, we've been doing this series on joy. And one I think that Matt has really kind of poured himself into preparing and then sharing with us. So I'm sure it's something that's really been on his heart.

So there's been a lot of talk from up here, but I think it's really good, isn't it, that everyone gets an opportunity to share. So that's what we're going to do now. So Claire, if you'd like to come up. I've known Claire from family time for, I don't know how long, it's been a long time, when Tiffany used to come. So we're just going to pray for Claire. So Father God, I just pray that your peace rests upon Claire now as he shares her story. Give her the words and just take away the fear that she might be feeling of standing up in front of you and help her to feel the love that's actually coming back to her as she speaks.

And that we are inspired and encouraged by what Claire has to say as well. We ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. Joy and depression are so closely linked. Depression can happen when logically we should be happy. But something triggers that we can't understand.

Earlier this year, I started the first stage of dental implants that I need because of an accident I had when I was eight. This appointment took almost two hours. I left feeling unwell and sore, but happy in the knowledge that I was much closer to regaining my smile, having my new forever teeth.

[1 : 35] Two days after the surgery, I came here, feeling extremely sore. I came because I wanted prayer for my recovery. I arrived with a rather swollen face, stitches and four missing teeth. I couldn't wear my dentures due to the swelling.

I came in and extreme depression hit me like a wave. So I tucked myself away in the corner at the back, trying to go unnoticed as the tears started to flood down my face.

However, that was easier said than done because it wasn't long before Gemma came over to see if I was okay. I explained what was wrong and she asked the prayer team to take care of me.

I returned to the service back to my hiding spot where the tears restarted as if I'd turned on a tap. Other members of the congregation noticed my tears and invited me to join them.

And at the end of the service, I was approached by many others who listened and offered kind words of support. They were so kind to me and they gave me comfort. This was wonderful and I saw God's love.

[2 : 46] But unfortunately, unlike how easy it was turning that tap on, turning it off was not so easy. I felt very sorry for myself, worthless, wondering why I exist.

What was the point of me? What do I bring to this world? And the only answer I could muster was nothing. I bring nothing to this world and wished I didn't exist.

Over the course of the following week, my family were amazing, supportive, taking me out or simply having me round for dinner. They made me feel loved and wanted.

But still in my head, I was worthless. A burden on my family and everyone else. Yet no one gave me reason to feel like that. Quite the opposite.

It made no sense why I felt this way. Why I was so depressed. I couldn't explain it to myself, let alone anyone else. It made no sense.

[3 : 44] My head was telling me I should be happy. Overjoyed that I am having this treatment. A treatment that will change my life for the better. A treatment I've wanted done for so long.

But instead, all I felt was depression. Later that week, sat watching the telly. My tongue gently rubbed over one of the stitches. And it hit me like a thunderbolt.

This feeling had been triggered in my head. Almost like PTSD. And subconsciously, I was reliving a horrific memory. It was the feeling of that stitch against my tongue that took me back 35 years ago.

To the day I had the accident. I was just eight years old. Just moved into our new house. We had lived there all but an hour. I went out the front to play on my bike.

The house was a new build and the road not completed. Potholes disguised by gravel waiting to be tarmacked. I remember it as if it happened only yesterday.

[4 : 50] A few of us racing on our bikes. We flew down the hill. And my tyre hit a hole in the road. And I literally soared through the air. Screaming a blood curdling scream.

Fear coursing through my body. As I hit the ground face first. My top lip severed. And my two front teeth snapped in half. My brother helped me home to my parents.

I was screaming in pain. Head to toe in blood. My mum rushed to the door. Followed quickly by my dad. Followed by just about every neighbour in the street. Who stood around gawping and talking about me.

Though one did drive us to the hospital. Where I had over 20 stitches to put my mouth back together. The dental treatment had to wait. I came home and I didn't want to see anyone.

Not even my grandparents. I just hid away and would and couldn't go to school. I was off for 12 weeks. Something most kids dream of.

[5 : 53] But it wasn't a holiday. It was horrible. The depression I experienced from it was a curse. And soon starting a new school.

When no one knew me. Was daunting. Frightening. And I soon became the freak. With the big fat lip. Years of bullying and torment followed.

At age 14 I had a surgery to reduce the size of my lip. And over the years I met new people. And it became unnoticed. Which is fantastic. But my teeth were not such an easy fix.

I've had month upon month. Leading to year upon year of dental work and appointments. Different teeth from caps to crowns. To Mary Lambridges. To finally my dentures.

I believed that that was the end of solid teeth in my mouth. And that from a fairly young age. I would be left with removable teeth for the rest of my life. Once I had realised that this memory had triggered my depression.

[6 : 57] Things started to look brighter. And I realised that soon. Thanks to my parents. I will have permanent teeth. I will have permanent teeth. And I can go back to leading a normal life.

Not worrying that they might fall out whilst I'm out for a meal. Or sat in the pub with friends. 35 years of upset coming to a close. A new chapter in my life.

A new beginning so to speak. My happy ending. During that bout of depression. I turned to the Bible for inspiration. And listened to songs of worship that helped me.

Three songs in particular. The first one has helped me through many times of trials and tribulations. Grief, sadness and times of worry. And that's Matt Redmond's 10,000 Reasons.

And another is the Newsboys. You are my King. And one I have turned to many times. Since finding my faith. Is from Psalm 42. As the deer panteth for the water.

[7 : 56] Often when I'm very low. I will read Psalm 42. It gives me strength to keep going. When I read Psalm 42. I see someone who was also depressed.

But doesn't give up. Wants to meet with God. Wants to praise him. Even though they've been tormented and bullied. And it reads. As the deer longs for streams of water.

So I long for you, O God. I thirst for God. The living God. When can I go and stand before him? Day and night I have only tears for food.

While my enemies continually taunt me. Saying, where is this God of yours? My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be. I walked among the crowds of worshippers.

Leading a great procession to the house of God. Singing for joy and giving thanks. Amid the sound of a great celebration. Why am I discouraged?

[8 : 54] Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God. I will praise him again. My saviour and my God. Now I am deeply discouraged.

But I will remember you. Even from the distant Mount Hermon. The source of the Jordan. From the land of Mount Mizar. I hear the tumult of the raging seas. As your waves and surging tides sweep over me.

But each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me. And through each night I sing his songs. Praying to God who gives me life. Oh God my rock I cry.

Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief. Oppressed by my enemies. Their taunts break my bones. They scoff. Where is this God of yours?

Why am I so discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God. I will praise him again. My saviour and my God.

[9 : 51] Another passage that has helped me to understand the support I have received from others. Was John 13.34-35. So now I am giving you a new commandment.

Love each other just as I have loved you. You should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world. That you are my disciples. Through these songs and verses.

And the people who listened. And supported me while I sobbed. And made me feel wanted. Who showed me that I matter when I didn't believe it. We're in fact doing God's work.

God works within each and every one of us. We are his children. And it is through those who show love and kindness to others. Including those who are depressed and don't want to listen.

Who can't see the wood for the trees. Are showing an amazing love. They are doing God's work. It is with great thanks to everyone who showed me love when I was depressed.

[10 : 51] Who showed me that God does love me. And that I am worthy and not worthless. And that I do play an important role in this world. And with great thanks to God.

Who not only sent people my way to help me. He also sent people my way who needed my help.

Practical help that I could give them to help make their lives that bit better. It was through one of the hardest and darkest weeks of my life.

When I felt so alone. That God sent me so many people in various forms. To show me and prove to me. That in actual fact.

I was not alone. And I am loved. And all those people helped to bring me back into the lightness. To a place where I could once again experience joy and life.

And God's love. Two more things that show us that God is always there when we need him. One is in the form of a joke. But quite accurate. It shows us that people around us offering their help and support.

[11 : 53] Are actually sent from God. And they are in fact miracles. Miracles happen in normal forms. They are not magical. They are people sent to us by God.

Because he loves us. A Christian man is on the top of a roof. During a great flood. A man comes by in a boat and says. Get in. Get in.

The Christian man replies. No. I have faith in God. He will grant me a miracle. Later. The water is up to his waist. And another boat comes by.

And the guy tells him to get in again. He responds that he has faith in God. And God will give him a miracle. With the water at about chest high. Another boat comes to rescue him.

But he turns down the offer again. Because God will grant him a miracle. With the water at chin high. A helicopter throws down a ladder. And they tell him to get in. Mumbling with the water in his mouth.

[12 : 49] He again turns down the request for help. For the faith of God. He arrives at the gates of heaven. With broken faith. And says to St Peter. I thought God would grant me a miracle.

And I have been let down. St Peter chuckles and responds. I don't know what you're complaining about. We sent you three boats and a helicopter. The next one I won't read out.

You probably all know it. You can find it on the internet. But works very similar to that. Is the footprints in the sand. Personally I think that both the joke. And that poem are telling us the same thing.

That no matter what you are going through. Or struggling with. God is with you in some form. The people he sends you. Are a gift. Not to be taken for granted. I am so glad I came here that Sunday.

And I thank each and every one of you. Who helped me. Who listened to me while I sobbed. Who didn't walk away from me. Thinking I don't need this. It may not have seemed like I listened at the time.

[13 : 50] But I did. And it's brought me even closer to God. So thank you. Thank you. Thank you. It's often a little thing.