

The Repair Church

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, yep, sorry, trying to look at it without the glasses on, which is clearly a bad idea. Welcome, I was hoping I might have some volunteers to help with the first part of this.

Charlie's shaking his head at me. Do you want to help Holly? No? Well, what can you do? I'm going to pick on some, Andy, you'll help me, won't you? You can pretend, you can pretend to be a little. It's all right, I'm not going to drop water on your head or anything like that, so I'm much more generous than John. Actually, just sit down there for a minute and then I'll... Yeah, I'm impressed. I want you to sort some things out for me in a minute, but I'll do my... So I've heard from a few years ago that if I come to this church, I need this.

A good Yorkshire umbrella, yes. Oh, you fixed the roof. Oh, are you sure? Actually, it looks quite sunny out there, so I might not need it today. I do remember, though, one Sunday morning, standing here talking to people and rain pouring over there, and I think it was you, Ken, that was running around with a bucket. Yeah, see, you don't think I'll need this today. No, we've had the roof repaired, restored. There's lots of other things. If you look up there, you can see restoration is still going on. But if you look up there, that beautiful lettering was getting a bit tatty when we moved in. That's been repaired and restored. So it made me think a bit about a TV show that we really liked, so I thought I brought another little helper as well. But I will still need you in a minute. Yeah, a bit more cuddly than Andy will. Certainly from my point of view, anyway. So this is my teddy bear. I was given this when

I was about three months old. So he's getting on a bit. And if you look at him closely, he's a little bit... He's Fredbear. He's not called Fred. He's a bit better on the back, but he's getting a bit worn and tatty. And a couple of years ago, his eyes fell out and I had to stitch them back in again. Poor. You could be a bit more sorry for him than that. Oh, yeah.

That was my teddy bear. But it made me think about a television show I said, as I really like. Anyone guess the one I'm thinking of? Not Paddington. A show to do with mending things. Repair shop. Yeah? Yeah? Anybody seen the repair shop? Yeah, what a nice show. So they bring around lots of things. And sometimes they get old tatty teddies like this. He's got a new hole there I hadn't noticed before. Anyway. But they painstakingly mend these things and repair them. And maybe if I took my bear in, which I'm not sure I want to because I'm a bit anxious about it. But anyway, he might come back with a nice fluffy tummy and his nose newly embroidered. So it made me think about mending things and restoring things. So this is where Andy comes in. Because I've got some old copper coins in here. I told you it wasn't very difficult. So, but I just want you to pick out the muckiest coins from there and then we'll hold them. Yeah, two or three. Yeah. It's all right. I haven't put any big coins in there. Thank you. All right. Yeah. So thank you very much. You can sit down now. So I've got a couple of really mucky old 2Ps here. Now yesterday, this 2P looks like that 2P. So we're going to do a bit of restoration of coins. It might take a while so I might have to check them at the end of the service. But do you believe that that coin looks like that one yesterday? No. Holly and John aren't sure. Very wise. I did discover when I got this one cleaner that it's actually a, I think it's a Guernsey 2P. So it's not even valid. So that was a waste of effort, wasn't it? So. And I've got a couple of 1Ps here as well. Same issue.

[4 : 37] They were really mucky yesterday. So I found a little tip for cleaning up coins. Put those little ones in there. So those are your coins that you chose, Andy. We're going to see if we can get them to look like those nice shiny ones by the end of the service. So I need my special ingredient.

Coke. Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah. All right. This is what it does to your inside. Well, yes. There is that. So do you think if I put Coke in with those coins it's going to make them look cleaner?

You can go up this way, yeah. Oh yeah, you're up. Hmm. Getting a bit more confidence now. Unfortunately, I did open it yesterday, so it's not going to go all over the floor. So.

I'm just going to leave those in there. And we will check on them later in the service.

Yes. Do you ever get the coins to the rest? Um. Pff. Not till after the service. Or we'll never keep up with your plea.

[5 : 50] Yeah. Um. But in one sense, whether I can manage to clean those coins up or not, doesn't really matter. They are actually still legal tender. Even though they're mucky.

Um. But as Christians, we know that God is in the restoration business. Um. We can make a big fuss about making things look nice. I can take my teddy to the repair shop and get them to make him look all nice and fluffy and new again.

Um. But God is more interested in restoring us on the inside. When I try and walk with God and try and follow him and be obedient to him, he might not do much about the outside of me, but he's changing me inside.

He's in the restoration business. Um. Psalm 23, which is a lot of people's favorite psalm, the one about the Lord's my shepherd, but part way through that it talks about, he restores my soul.

He makes us whole again. He puts us back together again. Just like the ladies in the repair shop might put my teddy back together again. But God does it on the inside.

[6 : 58] Um. Um. And there's a couple of verses I love in Colossians that says, once you're alienated from God, so once we're a long way from God, and we're enemies in our minds, so that's inside because of the way we behaved.

And it says, but now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body. That means he's restored relationship with us. It's meant that we can be part of his family. And it says, he presents you wholly in his sight, without blemish, so without any mucky bits on us, and free from accusation.

So God is in the repairing and restoration business. And we're going to talk about that a little bit more. Um. But I'm going to hand back to Sandy now, and we're going to sing. Okay. And I will leave that that, and we'll have a look at the end.

I'm hoping that we'll see a difference by the end of the service. Okay. So I'm going to read from Luke chapter 15.

It's a story that I'm sure most of us have heard many times before. Um. But it's always worth coming back to.

[8 : 04] So as Sandy mentioned earlier, we're looking at the story of the prodigal son, or the parable of the lost son, as it's called in my version here. And I'm starting to read from verse 11.

Jesus continued. There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate.

So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he'd spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his field to feed pigs.

He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, He said, He ran to his son, He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

[9 : 45] The son said to him, Father, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. Your brother has come, he replied, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, Look, all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders.

[10 : 51] Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you killed the fattened calf for him.

My son, the father said, You're always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. Can I have the next slide please, Josh? So as I said, it's a well-known story.

It's one that if you go into Sunday school most weeks, you've probably heard as well about these two sons. But I think sometimes we miss the impact because we know it so well.

The younger son's request was pretty outrageous actually. He was basically saying, Dad, you know, I want my money now. And the people listening would have been completely shocked by that.

[11 : 57] You know, we've heard the story lots of times before, but to say that in the middle of this gathering for Jesus to say this would have caused real anxiety and upset and outrage.

How dare this younger son do this? It's not very respectful towards his dad. And then we read that once he got the money, he didn't do something sensible with it.

He didn't say, well, you know, I'll put as a down payment on a house or, you know, I'll invest it in setting up my business. No, he went away and blew it all. You know, he had a really big shopping spree or whatever the equivalent was in those days.

He spent all his money, squandered it. So basically he wasted it. He didn't put it to good use. He didn't justify his father's trust in giving him the money. He couldn't go back to his dad and say, look, that money you gave me, I've done something really sensible with it.

No, he just threw it away, bought lots of things he didn't need and wasted it. And so unsurprisingly, what happens if you've got lots of money and then you blow it all?

[12 : 59] You end up in a mess. And sometimes on the news you see stories about people who've won loads in the lottery and then actually they can't cope when they just blow it all and they end up in a complete mess. And it's really sad.

And so the second son found himself in a really bad place. No money, nothing to eat and employed in a role that would make him even more despised.

And that's another shocker for the listeners that this son ended up working with the pigs, which were regarded as unclean animals. So that was, it wasn't like he just went out and tended the sheep.

He went and worked with the pigs, which were considered to be really dirty. And I found a, I tried to find a dirty picture of pigs. If you look closely, those ones are quite mucky, but they still look quite cute, don't they? But I don't think the ones that this poor guy ended up with were meant to be cute.

So, he's sitting there in this field with the pigs. Nobody's given anything to eat. He can't even eat the food that the pigs are having. Not that I'd really want to do that, but if you're really hungry, you might be that desperate.

[14 : 08] And he sat there and he thought a while. Next slide please, Josh. And eventually, he came to his senses. He had one of those moments like, oh, I've really messed up here.

I've got it all wrong. I've done, you know, had all this money, wasted it. And the first thing he needed to do was acknowledge that he was in a mess. He needed to admit that he'd messed up big style, that he'd made poor decisions, that he'd ended up somewhere, which wasn't a great place to be.

But as he did that, he also realised that there was a way out. He thought back to his dad's house and thought, I know. And, you know, I'm sure dad's not going to be very pleased with what I've done, but I could go back and say, you know, could I work as one of your servants?

And then at least I'd have some food to eat. So he recognised that there was a way out. He needed to go back to his dad. And he saw that as a way out. He also needed to admit that he was in the wrong.

You know, imagine if he'd gone back to his dad and said, well, yeah, I blew all that money, but who cares anyway? You know, his dad might have been, or he would have expected his dad not to be impressed. So he needed to admit that he was in the wrong.

[15 : 21] And sometimes when we get in a mess, actually, it's hard, first of all, to admit we're in a mess, but also then to maybe say, yes, actually, I did do something wrong there. I did goof up.

I did make a mess. And I need to come back to my heavenly father and ask for his help. So then we move on to the father's response.

So how did the father respond? Well, here's another shocker. Because the father was actually looking out for his son. It says in the text, and this verse, I thought I was going to do an Andy actually well up at that point.

It says the father was looking out for him. And when he saw his son, he ran to him. He didn't just wait and say, well, what are you doing here? He ran to his son. He was looking out for him.

He was filled with compassion. He wasn't filled with anger at the way his son has behaved, as the listeners might have expected. He didn't refuse to speak to his son, as the listeners might have expected.

[16 : 21] No, he was looking out for him, and he was filled with compassion. And it's such a wonderful image of God, how God responds to us, that he's looking out for us. He has a heart full of compassion for each one of us.

And it's easy to miss that when we're focused on the mess we've made. And it's a really important reminder that God is a God of compassion. Not only that, he saw his son coming.

He ran to him, and he flung his arms around him. Now, if you've been working with the pigs for some time, you had no money for food and for clothes, presumably. I think he'd probably be pretty smelly, wouldn't he?

And quite grubby. And probably not the most attractive proposition in terms of giving somebody a hug. But the father didn't care. He ran to him, and he flung his arms around him. And he embraced him, because he was so pleased to see his son back again.

And not only that, he went on to throw a party. It says he killed the fattened calf. So that was, you know, an important animal that would be saved for special occasions. And he said, right, we're going to have a big feast.

[17 : 25] You know, not much fun for the poor old fattened calf. But good news for the son, who had been welcomed back into the family. And not only that, he put rings on his fingers. He gave him a robe.

He put sandals on his feet. And all these things were not just nice things to have. But he was saying, my son belongs to this family. He's an important member of our family. And I'm restoring him to the position he had before in the household.

He didn't say, oh yeah, go and work with the servants. Quite right, you've messed up. We'll see how you do in a few months' time. No, he welcomed him back into the family. And he made it clear to everybody else that that's what happened.

By giving him special gifts. So, everything going nicely. I'm sure the listeners were thinking, you know, what on earth could happen next? You know, this son's done all this stuff.

He's been disrespectful to his father. He's wasted that money. The father's welcomed him back into the family. How weird is that? But anyway, they have this big party.

[18 : 25] And along comes the older brother. Right, I know it's sisters on this photograph. But I've seen this one before actually. I think it's just, there's some serious sibling rivalry going on in that family, I think.

So, you can tell that they're not very happy. And finally, the listeners find someone they can identify with in the story. Because the older brother says, what's going on?

You know, I've never behaved like that. I've worked for you all these years. Slaved, he says in my version of this story. I've worked really hard. You know, I've done all the things I should have done. And you haven't given me anything.

You know, didn't even give me a goat to celebrate with. Which is obviously quite a lot smaller than a fattened calf and less important. But you know, you didn't even give me a goat to celebrate with. He got very angry. And you can imagine the listeners saying, yeah, good on you.

I'd be pretty fed up at that point as well. And feeling quite a lot of empathy with his older brother. He points out the injustice of the situation.

[19 : 27] As he sees it, he says it's not fair. Just like I think there's an amount of it's not fair going on in this family here. But it's not fair, you know, why should he get all the good things when he behaved so badly?

And I behaved well and actually I've not got anything out of this. And he emphasized his own righteousness. He said, you know, I've been really well behaved. I've done good things. You know, look at me, how respectable I am.

So, and the father tries to reason with him and says, yeah, actually, everything I have is yours.

But we need to rejoice because this son who ran off, your younger brother ran off, made a mess of things. But he's come back. And that's a cause for celebration. Now the story doesn't go on to say whether the elder brother said, oh yeah, good point.

Or whether actually went away and sulked a bit more. Or who knows? But it's, it can be quite a stark reminder for us, can't it, sometimes? Because if we feel like, you know, we're justified in our, you know, we've been trying hard and so and so over there has made a mess.

[20 : 32] And why are they getting more attention? And we can easily fall into that older brother syndrome instead of recognizing that we need God's forgiveness. We need God's compassion that we all mess up.

So just a few things to take away from this. So, last slide please. So what can we learn from this? What can we take away from this?

I think the first thing is really important that we don't put limits on God's compassion. The younger son thought that he could go back and be a servant, but he couldn't go back into the father's family.

He limited God's compassion. The older brother put limits on the father's compassion because he said, well, you shouldn't be treating him like this because he's behaved so badly.

And we tend, we can get tempted to put our own boundaries around God's compassion. But over and over in scripture it tells us God is full of compassion, abounding in compassion in some verses.

[21 : 33] However much compassion we think God has for us, there's always more and more and more. So don't put limits on God's compassion. Remember that he sees things differently from us.

We need to be honest when we mess up as well. And that's not always easy, isn't it? We don't like to get caught out or we don't like to feel that we've made a mess of things. But actually, part of the younger brother's journey back into the family was admitting that he was in a mess and he needed to come back to his father.

But I also think that we can learn from this to be channels of God's generosity. First of all, for ourselves, if we mess up, remember that God is compassionate, that he forgives, that he doesn't throw us out of his family because we've messed up.

But also for others around us, the people we know who are fellow believers or people who are not yet Christians, let's be channels of God's generosity. Let's avoid being the older brother and saying, how dare you behave like that?

You know, you don't deserve anything. Let's remember God's generosity to us and extend that same generosity to others. In the Lord's Prayer, there's a little bit about, forgive us our sins.

[22 : 45] So forgive us the mess we've made. As we forgive those who sin against us, and that's quite a challenge, isn't it, to remember that we need to forgive others.

So let's be channels of God's generosity and forgiveness. Let's remember that God is a God of restoration. He restores us to his family and he wants to do the same for others too.

And he can work through us to do that if we let him. So I'm just going to have a look at these coins. They're still looking quite mucky actually, so they might need a bit longer.

I did cheat and bring a toothbrush to scrub at them. Yeah, it's Andy's, but it's alright. I'll rinse it afterwards. You can see it's getting, the ones I did yesterday took about an hour or something.

But you can see it's coming up a little bit. I'm going to leave them in there and I'll take them out again after the service and have another scrub. Please don't anybody drink this Coke, do I?

[23 : 46] Yes. Apart from Andy. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But you can see, if you're standing here you can see it's starting to get a bit cleaner, so I'm going to leave that there.

[illegible]