

The Rector's Ramblings: "A repair shop in every community" – July 2021

Dear Friends

One of TV's most unlikely hits in recent years has been "The Repair Shop". For those of you unfamiliar with the concept behind the show, which now attracts audiences of 6.7 million, is, on the face of it, a recipe for very dull TV: People bring their dilapidated old possessions and heirlooms to a barn, where a group of experts restore them. Then the owners come and get them. But there is, of course, much more to it than that.

The reason behind the show's success is that almost every item brought into the repair shop has its own very special, and often very moving, story to tell. Recently I watched an episode where the team were restoring a clock set into the side of a beautiful wooden ship with metal sails. The clock had been given as a gift by a grandfather to his grandson when he was boy. Now, grown up and with a son of his own, the grandson returned to the barn for the big reveal.

The clock's owner was deaf and communicated through sign language. His son interpreted as his father expressed his emotion at being reunited with the clock, now restored to its former glory. He said that he could suddenly see his grandfather more clearly in his mind, and that seeing the clock as it was when he had received it so many years ago made him feel like he had been reunited with his grandfather who died when he was just 10 years old.

We are taught, as Christians, to have a cautious relationship with material objects. The Bible teaches us not to place greater importance on material things than God; it warns us of the dangers of covetousness which leads to an insatiable desire for more and more. Indeed, those who are called to live a life of Christian devotion as monks or nuns are required to take a vow of poverty in which they give up their personal possessions and any sense of ownership, sharing all they have with the community.

So how do we square this teaching with the very real and often very emotional relationship that many of us have with at least some of our possessions? Can we enjoy our valued possessions and still be faithful Christians? The answer is clearly yes. The key to all of this is simple: it's about our hearts. Do we live for our wealth and possessions, or do we live to use them for the glory of God? If Jesus came to you today and said, "I have great plans for you. Come, sell everything you have and follow Me" would you be able to part ways with your things? This is the test to see if you make possessions an idol or not.

Back to that barn and those expert craftsmen and women. What the world really needs is an equivalent barn where broken people can turn up and share openly and honestly the stories behind how we came to be broken and to acknowledge our own part in that story; a place where, having shared the story, we can then ask to be carefully, lovingly, painstakingly restored to our former glory. Imagine if we had the opportunity to be repaired, restored, re-created by our master craftsman creator, lovingly held in his hands as he removes all the dirt and stains, cracks and damage of our lives, restoring us to his original vision for us.

Well, the good news is that such a barn does exist. In fact, there is one in almost every village, town and city in the country. Churches are the repair shops where we can go to be repaired, renewed, and restored by God our Creator.

If we are moved by the restoration of a clock, imagine the emotion and power of seeing human beings transformed, forgiven, and restored. Now that is a show I'd love to watch!

With grateful thanks for the blessing which you all are to one another and to me as well.

Mark

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