

“And provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.” Isaiah 61:3

Coventry England was mostly destroyed on November 14, 1940, by bombs and fire. The beautiful 14th Century medieval Cathedral Church of St Michael in the town was also destroyed. In 1962 a new Cathedral was built but the shell of the previous cathedral remains standing in front of the new one. Some of the statutes of the old Cathedral are still there as well as some new artwork. The decision was made to leave the remains of the prior cathedral as a reminder and a symbol of reconciliation and forgiveness. In the rubble after the bombing blitz, two pieces of wood were found, laying upon each other in the form of a cross. They were picked up and secured together and remained outside among the remains but eventually a replica was placed outside, and the original was placed in the new cathedral. The original is pictured below, as well as the replica that is outside on the original altar with the words, “Father Forgive.”

Two things hit me in this story. First being that in times of pain and loss and sorrow, God is faithful to show up and give us signs of His faithfulness. We only need to be observant and look because out of the ashes, our God brings beauty. And second is, what a tremendous testimony to the power of forgiveness and reconciliation. That even in the face of being dealt great harm, we can rise up and come to a level of forgiveness and restoration. That is what Christ calls us to do...forgive. And Paul tells us we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. This wonderful community in the countryside of England has exemplified this for us.

