Over the last 4 or 5 weeks Bonnie and I have been watching one of those intense British crime dramas on TV.

It was called Unforgotten.

It was well written, well-acted, and the story line intersects with this story from Acts.

Let me tell you a little bit about Unforgotten.

An old terrace house is demolished, and in the ground under the house a skeleton is found. It proves to be modern, within the last 40 years, and through a series of good coincidences, backed up by good detective work, the identity of the dead man is found. The police also find his dairy. In the dairy are a series of names.

These names become the people around which the story is woven.

The bones of this young man, he was young when he died, give rise to a series of stories, witnesses if you like to the events at the time of his death, and after it.

The discovery of the skeleton, and the subsequent investigation start unravelling the lives of the people mentioned in his dairy and their families and amongst people they know.

One is an Anglican priest

One runs with her husband a sports academy for young people in a housing estate

One is a successful business man, on the verge of being made a life Peer

One is a retired bookkeeper.

The young man died in difficult and violent circumstances, and each of the people were involved in different ways, but their involvement in his death had left indelible marks on them.

The story often had the characters reliving the past in short dream like sequences.

Since his death, they had each of them in their own ways had changed, and they had tried to live their lives in new and in many cases better ways.

But the discovery of the skeleton burst all that open.

The fascination of the series was the constant questioning: was exposing all this dirt and unhappiness from the past worth it? And in the end, and because it was a TV programme, it was.

And they had to confront the horror of their past, and be truthful and at last honest with their families and those they loved. For some the lies that they had lived by had to stop. For some the outcome was cathartic but devastating.

The last few scenes of the series showed in a way reminiscent of Shakespeare what happened to all the people and their families.

One of the characters had been a gangster enforcer, a violent and quite evil man, but he had made good, was a successful business man, and his two children were free of the violence of his past and had careers of their own. But when his son calls the police and come clean about his father’s past, the father at first is angry at the betrayal, but then in a moment of realization, sees that the son is acting in the way he wanted him to act, as a good member of society.

And so he faces the music over what he had done.

In other stories reconciliation, truth and grace abound.

None of what happens is easy or trite, and in some of the stories the truth is almost two painful to watch.

How do I see this relating to our story from Acts?

The key word for me is witness.

Peter and John were witnesses to the truth as they stood in front of the Sanhedrin, witnesses for God, following an imperative that was stronger and more compelling than what ever stories they were putting out.

What the TV series told me is that the truth is always more complex, and always difficult to tell. Sometimes being a witness for God, is complex, is difficult, is going to end in tears and painful realities, and yes and hopefully in grace and love as well.

The celebration of the resurrection is always preceded by the ugly reality of Good Friday.

Being a witness for God has consequences. Speaking the truth always does.

Peter and John were imprisoned, and as the story of their lives unfolded legend has it that they were martyred. St Peters in Rome is said to be built on the place where Peter met his death.

The story of the Christian church is the story of witnesses to the faith. Women and men in every age bearing witness to God and God’s truth.

That truth has not always had a great reception, and at times the simple message of Love that is at the heart of the Gospel has been greeted with hostility and violence, because people have not wanted to hear and understand what love actually means.

I don’t know if I do myself, especially if that message worms its way into me and challenges my assumptions about who I am, and what I believe. Upsets my world view.

You mean God we are to love them.

Whoever they are.

This is why Peter and John standing in front of the Sanhedrin risked everything to witness.

The TV programme Unforgotten showed that when the truth is witnesses to, good things can happen, but sometimes at a cost, great cost. But that at a profound level the truth allowed grace and love to work at a much deeper level in the people’s lives as the lies that surrounded them and papered over their world were exposed.

But grace abounded.

Is this not the same for us on all sorts of levels? Lies can be so hurtful in our lives, and build walls between us and do lasting damage to us. But the truth, can bring healing, especially when it is the truth spoken with love.