

Readings for Remembrance Sunday

10th November 2024

First Reading: Job 19:21-27a

Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!
Why do you, like God, pursue me,
never satisfied with my flesh?
“O that my words were written down!
O that they were inscribed in a book!
O that with an iron pen and with lead
they were engraved on a rock forever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: St John 6:37-40

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

A Reflection for Remembrance Sunday

From Ven John Green

When Reverend Clare asked me to write a reflection for Remembrance I thought that, rather than writing in sermon mode, I'd relate my personal feelings about Remembrance as a veteran of the Royal Navy as well as the son of someone who served in the RN during the Second World War.

From an early age I realised that Remembrance Sunday was not a victory parade, despite the medals, marching and military bands. My father had experienced a near-miss in the war, and had it not been for a routine swap of duties with someone else, he would have been killed when his ship was torpedoed. I can't say he was haunted with guilt but, like many survivors, there were obvious *'why-him-and-not-me?'* questions together with a feeling of unworthiness which surfaced at times. Dad had certainly seen plenty of action judging by the number of medals he'd been awarded, but they lived in a junk box in the cupboard under the stairs – I never saw him wear them once. I think they brought those memories and feelings too close to the surface.

So, for me, the focus of Remembrance has always been the two-minute silence – a time to remember and ponder the human cost of war – rather than all the paraphernalia that comes before and after. However, having served myself and lost friends in action, I know it's not that simple. While warfare can bring out the absolute worst in the human psyche, it can also bring out the best. I know from personal experience that the sort of intimate team work and shared risk that those in all the Services experience, is something that equips ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things – acts of self-sacrifice and heroism which it's appropriate to remember with pride.

For many of us who've been in the Services, the experience is life changing. They say, "You can take the man (woman) out of the Navy, but you can't take the Navy out of them!" or, in short, "Once Navy, always Navy!" I know the same is true for the other Services. Against that background, Remembrance isn't simply a once yearly *tick-in-the-box*. It's a formal acknowledgement of something we do for the rest of the year – remember those known personally to us who have given their lives in the service of their country AND the almost unreckonable number from the family of our Service who have sacrificed themselves or, indeed, have been sacrificed for the greater good.

But this remembrance isn't simply a lament for the fallen – while it's a recollection of the huge sacrifice made by individual men and women, it's also an acknowledgement of what that sacrifice has given us. We live in an age and society where our emphasis on individual freedom leads us increasingly to talk of our rights, be that as citizens, consumers or human beings; and all too often we take those *rights* for granted, something to which we're automatically entitled. For me, part of Remembrance is keeping an awareness that while those *rights* are part of living in a *free* society, they didn't come cheap. Many men and women paid a high price for the freedoms we enjoy.

Keeping the memory alive is important. It's a sad part of human nature that grievances can run through many generations, but gratitude is short lived. Just after the end of the First World War, David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, spoke eloquently about making Britain a land fit for heroes to live in. They were fine words, but never translated into anything tangible. As Rudyard Kipling observed a few decades earlier,

"...For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Chuck him out, the brute!

But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot."

So, Remembrance is about *valuing* the sacrifice of those who've died in the service of their country – but there's another dimension to it. It's also about recognising the values – you might say *valuing the values* – which underpinned that sacrifice; values which engendered a unity of purpose, an understanding of the common good and a willingness, if necessary, to die for it.

At this point it would be easy to look around at the world we're living in and point the finger at leaders who thrive by creating division and, in conflict, encourage their military to commit despicable, inhuman acts; but this isn't the time for an old man's rant.

Instead, I invite you to join me in remembering before God those who have fallen in two World Wars and armed conflicts since; to acknowledge their sacrifice in the cause of justice and peace, and value the legacy they have won for us; to recognise the unity of purpose which inspired ordinary people to achieve extra-ordinary things, and to encourage that, rather than division, in the world around us.

They say you only realise what you had when it's gone. We not only owe a huge debt to those who have given their lives in the cause of our freedom, we are hugely privileged to have the freedoms we enjoy. Yes, there are injustices and inequalities, and our society is far from perfect. But the foundations have been laid for us at huge cost – it's now up to us to continue building on them. Perhaps even one-hundred-and-six years after Lloyd George spoke of making this a land fit for heroes we can aspire to make it a reality.

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.