

Remember ?

10 11 13

They shall not grow old
as we who 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.

Our text today may be found in Luke's gospel, chapter 20 and verse 38:

'Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living
for to him all of them are alive.'

A real joy in growing old is our many memories; a real sadness is one can forget. What is truly sad about Alzheimers is that disease can rob us of our memories, that we forget so much that was and is so important to us still – not good, not kind, not nice !

But, today, we are here to remember. For a start, you have remembered to come to church early, to start our service early so that we can have our Act of Remembrance at 11.00. In the old days, when Sybil was our Reader, she told me that we had our Act of Remembrance at 12.00 because 12.00 French time was

11.00 in England so our act of remembering would coincide with that of those back home – logical ! I remember the late Ida Beau coming up to our eagle lectern and saying in her beautifully enunciated English the words that earlier we heard Rodney say – ‘They will not grow old . . .’ – and I wonder whether Ida was thinking of her late husband, Commandant Marcel Beau, as she said the words ‘at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.’ Did she remember him as the handsome, young, Free French naval officer who’d swept her off her feet at a dance during the Second World War or as a mature and successful man in his prime, awarded the Légion d’honneur, Chevallier de la Légion d’Honneur, for his services to France ?

And, it is for service to Queen and Country, for King and Country, that we have come to remember the host of men and women, young men and young women, who, in their day, made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives in the service of the greater good, paying the ultimate price that anyone can pay, dying for what we believe in. Many, in my life time, have died in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in the Falklands, Suez and in Korea, not to mention the young man wearing a Help the Heroes tee-shirt who was hacked to death by a terrorist in a Woolwich street. The role of honour for those who died in the First then the Second World War are inscribed on memorials across the UK and here in France.

But how do we as Christians make sense of the fact of death ? Here, today’s passage from Luke’s gospel can be of help. Like the Pharisees, Jesus believed in life after death. Sadducees, however, did not – so that is why they were sad you see. Here, they are putting a theological test question to Jesus which is meant to

catch him out and to expose just how silly the thought of life after death was to them. And their question: whose husband would a widow be in heaven if before she died she were to marry and widow seven brothers and was still childless ? And Jesus essentially tells them they haven't got a clue – simply because life after death will be so very different from this life. And so we come to that great statement which is our text today: **Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living for to him all of them are alive.'**

What Jesus is showing us is that we are all alive in the mind of God. In one sense, of course, we will all die – you must have seen and experienced for yourself the fact death at some point in your life. But God remembers us. To him we have not died. Like him we live eternally. Eternal life is the promise expressed in the resurrection of Jesus on that first Easter Day. We are alive in the mind of God because he is ever mindful of us and we live in and through him, not only in this world but in the life of the world to come.

Why is Remembrance Sunday important ? Why is our Act of Remembrance vital to our mental, spiritual and emotional well being ? Simply by doing so, we are doing what God does for us and wants us to do for others – remembering. Remembrance is an act of love in which we call to mind those who have died in the service of others. In that act of remembering, those we remember remain members of our community. 'We will remember them.'

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

10th November, 2013

G: Sermons 28 : Remember

