

Sermon Notes

**St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville**

**Remembrance Day
11 November 2007**

**Preacher
The Reverend Chris Albany
Rector**

Readings: Haggai 1.15b-2.9; Psalm 98; Thessalonians 2.1-5, 13-17; Luke 20.27-40

The dead don't cling

Today is Remembrance day, the day when above all days we recall those who, in the great tragedy of war; gave their lives for Australia and for the freedom of human-kind; who still sleep amid the ridges of Gallipoli and the terraced hills of Palestine; in the lovely cemeteries of France or the shimmering haze of the Libyan desert; amid the mountains and olive groves of Greece and the Middle East, and the jungle of Malaya, New Guinea and Pacific Islands, the rugged Korea and Vietnam, amid loving friends in our Mother Country and our own land; and in unknown resting places in every continent and every sea.

We remember all who have fallen in both world Wars, in the air and on sea and land, and all our loyal friends among the people of New Guinea and elsewhere. We think of every man, woman and child who, in those crucial years, died so that the lights of freedom and humanity might continue to shine. And we remember those who in various parts of the world are caught up in conflict still – in such places as Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Myanmar; Iraq and the Middle East to name just a few.

As we think about all this and we humans propensity for violence I wonder whether you have ever asked yourself who makes wars? Now have you ever heard something like the following being said:

- I don't like you, get out of my way.
- I want what you've got, hand it over.
- I'm better than you, and I'm going to prove it.
- I'll get even with you
- Do what I tell you or else!

Have you ever heard such things being said? I suspect we all have and often, going right back to the school yard when we were very young. You know I've heard words very like that within my own head – I guess we all have if we are honest. It's over such sentiments that people go to war. Its statements like those 5 which are the kinds of reasons which make people want to fight someone else. So who are the people who make wars? People like you and I. There exists a little bit of the war maker in each one of us. If we become very powerful and thought we could get whatever we wanted – or if we were scared enough – then we could be the people to start a war! Yet that in reality is the last thing any of us want. So we need to find ways of modelling a different way of living and relating. To learn to speak out against all forms of violence and oppression. To find ways to become peace-makers and doers of justice. Life givers rather than dealers in death.

Which brings me to the topic of death which is there centre stage in today's Gospel reading with its question about what happens once we die and the nature of relationships in the after-life? Do you ever think about dying and what happens after death? Or like the Sadducees of the Gospels do you think that this life is all there is? Notice how Jesus, like a good politician doesn't answer the question posed to him about this woman and her succession of husbands. Jesus has nothing to do with a patriarchal system in which the woman is only a mere chattel. The focus is on God – who

Jesus asserts is the God of the living – surely in the light of Easter, a reference to resurrection life and hope. We often talk as though we expect to be re-united with loved ones in life beyond death. Whether that is good news or bad news depends on the quality of the relationship in this life. For some such a thought may be quite devastating! Wasn't putting up with him/her in this life enough? Reality is that we don't know, and perhaps that is just as well and part of the wisdom of God. What we do know is that we will fully know as we are fully known and whatever the case it will be enough, more than enough. The focus is on God as Jesus' focus is in the Gospel and as is wonderfully expressed in a poem by Bruce Prewer based on this Gospel passage. Its entitled 'The Dead Don't Cling' and it goes like this.

The Dead Don't Cling

'Those who attain the resurrection do not marry or are given in marriage'.

The dead don't cling
to less than perfect joys,
or bind themselves
to vows that might disable.
They don't seek love
that's limited by years
and meet no more
at just one kitchen table.

The dead don't cling
to loving that excludes,
or seek one soul
to be the only friend.
They now belong
to a much larger whole,
and love the One
who links the one to all.

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It seems to me that gets the focus where it belongs, away from us individually and on us being collectively caught up into the fullness and the mystery of God who links us all together.
