**Remembrance Day**

By Bill Pugh

Since the terrible slaughter in WWI which shocked the world, on the 11th day at the 11th hour of the 11th month, we stop in silence to remember. So much loss, sacrifice and courage is represented in that silence. Respect and reverence. Grief for young lives, cut off in their prime. Raw personal memories for many. And it continues today.

Around the world there are names on memorials and shrines, in cities, towns and tiny country villages. According to custom, services are held, tributes made and wreaths laid.

There is another reason to pause and remember at this time. There are other very special names, not written on memorials in church, chapel or shrine, or in any public record anywhere.

These are ordinary people like us, with personal names, homes and families, who have been obliterated from the face of the earth by murderous bombing, at the hands of evil men who control weapons of mass destruction. And now this happens in the very midst of our so-called civilised society. Some are killed in the name of religion. Such is the force of destruction that whole families are obliterated from the face of the earth, as though they never were, leaving no mark nor imprint.

How will they be remembered, who have no memorial? The thought is overwhelming except, when we turn to scripture, tried and tested words of faith. We are encouraged to call God, Father, and to trust him as Jesus did. He spoke of the tiny sparrow, which falls to the ground mostly unnoticed. Save the assurance of the Lord, that not even the so-called seemingly unimportant is outside the Father’s notice and care.

Remembrance is a reverent and thankful calling to mind of the sacrifice, the courage and selflessness of generations of the past, human tragedy and loss. It, equally, is a call to not let this count for nothing, nor to ignore the lessons of history.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged his disciples with a radical approach to conflict. Awareness of spiritual poverty, humility, purity of motive, forgiveness and mercy, with love, even for enemies, and working for peace, and right behaviour to others, are what God requires.

With such commitment they will be salt of the earth and light to the world. Remembrance Day is enshrined in sacred memory. But with it comes a challenge to make the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, real for life on the plain.

**A woman of substance**

By Bill Pugh

While preaching by a stream, outside the city of Philppi, Paul met Lydia, a woman of considerable wealth and property, specialising in the sale of purple dyed garments.

As a believer in God, Paul’s preaching touched her. He baptised Lydia and her household into the Christian faith.

Her home of considerable size became a centre for Christian mission where the apostles stayed on their journeys.

Free from having to seek employment to finance their work, Lydia’s generosity enabled their mission to continue unhindered. Lydia’s conversion was a springboard for European Christianity and Christian outreach.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the history book of the Church, Luke records her story (Acts 16:11-15). From there the word spread to many places. An encounter with the Gospel by St Paul was the spark of mission. Lydia’s stewardship of her resources and generosity enabled the early missionaries to have a base on which to build.

**Reflection**

In today’s world there is great need. Mission is being hindered by Covid. Church budgets are overwhelmed. Not meeting together hinders the challenges of giving for the Lord’s work. The need is great. Our giving must increase if mission targets are to be met. There are people of means, like Lydia, out there who need to be challenged to give.

**Who wants to be a millionaire?**

By Geoff Serpell

This is a story of a wealthy man and his son who loved to collect rare works of art. In the collection were masters from around the world.

Making a long story short, the son was called up for duty in Vietnam, where he died saving the life of a fellow soldier. This soldier later knocked on the mate’s father’s door and handed him a picture he had painted of the wealthy man’s son. This picture of the deceased son was the pride and joy in the whole gallery of paintings.

Later the father also died and later still a great auction of all the paintings was arranged. Influential people flocked to the auction and were firstly shown the portrait of the late son.

“Who will bid for the picture of the son?” the auctioneer asked. Deathly silence. “We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one,” said a voice from the back of the hall.

It was a long time before a voice came, being from the long-time gardener of the man and his son. The bid was $10. No one else spoke. “Sold for $10,” called the auctioneer and then he closed down the auction.

Amid uproar, it was stated that whoever bought the painting of the son would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings.

“The gardener who took the son’s portrait gets everything.”

**Reflection**

God gave His son over 2000 years ago to die on the cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is: “The Son, the Son, who’ll take the Son?” Because you see. Whoever takes the Son gets everything.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, who so ever believeth, shall have eternal life. That is love.

**The early rain and the latter rain**

By Bill Pugh

To live and work in a northern farming community is first-hand experience of the many moods of nature.

To have eyes on the sky has meaning. The soil needs the early rain to penetrate below the surface, ready for the seed to germinate and, in Spring, a generous top-up combining with the sun to ripen the harvest.

When Moses gave the law from God to the people when they inherited Canaan he reminded them of the covenant between them and God.

“If you only will heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today, loving the Lord God, and serving him with all our heart and with all your soul, then he will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil, and he will give grass in your fields, for your livestock, and you will eat your fill.

“Take care, or you will be seduced into turning away, serving other gods and worshipping them, for then the anger of the Lord and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit: then you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 11:11-17)

**Reflection**

The Bible sets out the order of things, putting God first. Following the order of the seasons as he intended. Being blessed with the due rain and sun after planting. And the crops harvested at his appointed time. From early times farmers have followed the order of nature and been blessed with the fruits of their labour. In worship at harvest festival tables laden with produce have been blessed and given to hospitals and the poor.