**A Pleasant Sunday Evening**

**By Bill Pugh**

Years ago on a Sunday evening there was a programme on the ABC called

Great Hymns of Faith. Wonderful choirs introduced by the long-time organist at St Pauls Cathedral A E Floyd. I can still hear his rather quaint but lovely voice. I used to listen till just before I was to walk into our church next door to the Manse to take the Evening Service. One Hymn, often repeated, resonated with me - *The day you gave us, Lord, is ended*. Yet when Sunday worship is over and night falls, the Church is still unsleeping. All around the world as the new day dawns worship continues. Prayer is never silent. Fresh voices are praising God and telling of wondrous things happening in his Name.

Sometimes we feel our witness in the world is tiny. But together, with men, women and children around the world, we are building the Kingdom. Whatever the hour, day or night, Kingdom people are praising God.

**Reflection:**

*Read Tis 458 and may the last verse of Tillerton’s wonderful hymn inspire and encourage each of us.*

*So be it, Lord; your throne shall never,*

*Like earth’s proud empires, pass away;*

*Your kingdom stands, and grows forever,*

*Till all your creatures own your sway.*

**Processions**

By Geoff Serpell

In the very old days, feasts and festivals were regular events in the Jewish nation, some civil and some religious in nature.

The Hebrew word for pilgrimage was reserved for three annual feasts, while there was an annual pilgrimage which became a “processional” from towns and cities to the Temple.

There at the Temple, the nation of Israel remembered the past and renewed its faith in the Lord.

Modern day processions which readily come to mind include: the annual ANZAC day march to the shrine. Past and present military personnel from all the armed services take part in the march which culminates in a service to honour those who grow not old and have made the ultimate sacrifice in a theatre of war.

Olympic teams drawn from around the world come together each four years in an opening ceremony by processing into an arena, one country at a time.

It was the prophet and priest, Zechariah who was born in Babylon and returned to Judah in 538bc and is quoted in the OT book of Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly…See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

*Reflection:*

*God, your son’s cross brings us life and hope. As we begin Holy Week and recall Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem, may he enter our hearts and walk with us, help us and guide us. Keep us faithful in our walk with Jesus.*

**Generosity absolute**

By Bill Pugh

The wonderful response of people to the bushfire victims has reminded me of the response of the early Christians when the Spirit came upon them. Acts Chapter 4 records the story. The believers were of one heart and mind. Personal possessions were pooled and held in common. Homes and lands were sold, and the proceeds were laid at the apostles’ feet. There was not a needy person among them. Even one of the priestly class, a Levite, sold a field and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, who conferred on him a new name, Barnabas, which meant ‘son of encouragement’. Of course, the modern economy is structured differently to the ancient worlds. We have many needs which are met by taxes in the form of social service. But the world still has starving and homeless men, women and children. Many of different political persuasions are stateless and housed in refugee camps. indefinitely. How we need something of the spirit of that early band of Christians when the Holy Spirit moved them to give and give again and not count the cost. Great grace was upon them all .  
Reflection: *Read Acts 4:32-37.*

*In worship read or sing Sydney Carters wonderful words,*

*“When I needed a neighbour were you there?”. TIS 629*

**The Empty Tomb**

By Bill Pugh

Saint Luke describes the early morning scene on the first day of the week after the Sabbath. The women arrived to perform the ritual anointing of the body of Jesus as was the custom. The RSV translates their reaction with a very expressive word. PERPLEXED. Because the huge stone had been rolled away and the body gone. A devasting blow to their already distraught state. Nowhere to grieve now ,no resting place for their beloved .How could the stone have been rolled away? Had his body been stolen? Many were their thoughts. So confused, that they did not notice two men in dazzling apparel standing nearby. The two men said, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words.

Reflection: *Have we become blasé about the Easter message? We should be perplexed, and remember. It is for you and me, that he died. In person, by name. Let us read again Luke 24, and on our knees be thankful!*

*This is no idle tale, which was the apostles first reaction to the women’s discovery, early on the first Easter morning.*

**FAITH**

**By Bill Pugh**

Thanks for the Memory. A popular song sung by Bob Hope and Shirley Ross near the end of the film, *The Big Broadcast*. Their roles are those of a married couple on the brink of divorce. They sing this song recalling the ups and downs of their relationship, and they decide to stay together.

Thanks for the Memory. At school we learned times tables, poems and spelling by heart. I will always be grateful for those tests of memory. In Sunday School we learned Bible texts, still in my mind and available to recall. So helpful. Jesus knew the scriptures and could answer those who tried to trick him. Prizes were given at Sunday School for memory verses learned, including, set answers to shorter catechism.

So what is the future of biblical memory? Helpful words coming down to us from the life experience of people of faith. How special is a message triggered by memory for some situation relevant to life.

In my work I have seen how the stressed and anxious find peace from scripture committed to mind so long ago at Sunday School or RE classes. Like a Mallee farmer transported to a Melbourne hospital for urgent surgery. Flat on his back in strange and unfamiliar territory, all he could do was to recite Psalm 23, learned years ago in a Sunday School class in the bush. Words of the Psalms are well remembered in difficult times.

Down the track will the next generation have the benefit of a stored facility? Everything is available from the Internet at the type of a key. Electronic books, Bibles, hymns and prayers on an overhead. Very clever technology, but what about the quiet times, the situations where nothing like this is available? Where will spiritual wisdom come from? Memory is important for our mental and spiritual health. Wisely the Psalmist reminds us to “write down for the coming generation what the Lord has done.” And that includes what is stored in our minds to be prompted by the Spirit. The wisdom and benefits of oral tradition passed faithfully down the ages.

**Reflection:**

*We often visited a WW2 digger in a nursing home, a Christian gentleman, suffering from dementia. Sometimes at our greeting he opened his eyes, then drifted back to sleep. Sitting quietly, chatting, including him by name, a reading and a prayer was the pattern. No response. One afternoon we tried this. Singing “onward Christian soldiers marching as to war.…” He opened his eyes and joined in, word for word. Then he went back to sleep. Not in modern hymn books those words, but forever in his mind and heart. We left with a warm feeling.*

*Thanks for the Memory*