

SERMON ANZAC DAY HOLY COVENANT JAMISON. 2010

Archdeacon Anne Ranse

Hebrews 10:32-11:1 John 15:9-17 Psalm 46

I never knew my grandfather Charles William Dau.

He signed up for the First World War in the Royal Engineers Field Company and died from the effects of mustard gas while laying cables in a railway cutting on the Somme just 3 months before the war ended.

He gave his life and all for his country and for our freedom.

He left a wife and three small children in Victoria, a mother and father and 15 brothers and sisters of whom two were on the front line of the war also. His wife and children suffered persecution, humiliation and were ostracised because the family has a German name.

This experience, this impact on our family.....a peaceful family made up of clergy and missionaries was one of incredible pain and grief. It would have been so easy for the family to turn very bitter from these experiences but not so.....the focus was to make something good from our loss and his life so short lived and the pain the family was suffering in their persecution.

It was dealt with in such determination to bring something good into the world out of his death.

When we use to sing the hymn 'fight the good fight' I always thought of the Grandfather I never knew.

As I was writing this sermon I kept thinking of the parallel to Jesus Christ and the despair of his family and friends....how easy for them to be all discouraged and give up but not so, even under suffering and persecution they continued on as Jesus would have wanted them to...in fact, they carried on as Jesus instructed them too, sharing his love and salvation and being prepared to die for him.

I often think: What is life all about?

What have we learnt through wars and battles throughout our history?

What have we learnt about peace?

For me, wars drive me to reflect on the greater need of peace..... for each and every one of us to make our contribution to peace even in the smallest of ways.....to love our neighbour....to raise up the 'low,' the battlers, the 'Lazarus' people in our community.

To me it means a life of serving, serving God so I can then serve othersto serve in some small way to make lives better.....

But it's not about me, **except** the promise I made to God...to serve in a way that perhaps he meant us too.

To be active agents of peace and love where he is glorified by our actions.

God wants us to live in the knowledge of who he truly is because he wants us to know fulfilment, completeness and joy in our lives.

The gospel for today makes profound statements about our relationship with God.

'He says :You did not choose me, I chose you and gave you this work to go and produce fruit, fruit that will last'...

Jesus wants us to produce fruit, the fruit of the spirit...love, kindness, joy, peace, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self controlFruits of the Spirit.....Peaceful, loving attributes.....That he says will please the father and we will receive from him whatever we ask for in his name:.....

Another strong desire of God is that we love one another, a mandatory requirement for all Christians...*'no one has greater love than this..... to lay down one's life for one's friends'*.....die for your friends.....and we know what that implies.....not to go out and physically die for our friends but to come alongside Christ, who gave his life for us.... and serve him and through that serve others in Christian love...and in that.....we may have to change, become different... we may have to die to old self.

This passage from Johns Gospel was used during the war in sermons to encourage young men (mostly men at war in those days) to go and possibly die for God and country...

It was a wrong use of this text and it laid moral guilt on people at the time.

And indeed as we know, 10's of 1000's did die.

God honours, I believe the self sacrifice and dedication of those who sincerely and devoutly believe that they were doing their duty. But it's possible, says the Theologian Tom Wright, *'that God may judge those who use such texts to put moral pressure on people.'*

This passage actually talks of love and not war.

As I have said, Jesus emphasised that Christians must love one another.

He expected it of his followers then

and he expects it of us his followers now.

That expression of love for others can be seen in many ways in our lives if we are following Jesus command to love others as he loves us.

Now, you will know in yourself what it is that you do in Christian love for others just as I know what I do.

Amongst my many ministries I serve others in a life that I have dedicated to God's work as he has asked of me. He has chosen me, as the gospel says...likewise he has chosen you.

I think of the many blessings that I receive by showing love to others.....it's often a fact that the blessings go both ways.

I recall in the Holistic Care Nursing program the great joy and delight a family of four and their mother,

a Sudanese family

doing it tough,

expressed with tears and hugs at a simple gesture of giving them a Christmas tree to put a few presents under that they had been given from a charity agency.

A simple act that brought such joy. But it was greater than joy. It was about love, caring and including.

The young lad in this family, aged 7 asked me if I could paint his bike, a very battered and well loved bike that many of us would have tossed away long ago. He wanted it black and red for some reason so I asked one of the volunteers in the Holistic care program to see to this for me. It turns out that the young lad was delighted at the prospect of having his bike painted but then asked could we make it bigger too! This boy now has a, bigger and better 2nd hand bike.....

It takes very little to please a person through expressions of love.

I want to put in a plug here for the Holistic Nursing program. It is growing and offering love and care to people around us in the community that is enabling them to have a better quality of life.

You will see in the pew bulletin that there is a meeting of volunteers for this ministry on the 29th April. Can I encourage you to come along and hear what great things this ministry is doing, out of our faith community here and perhaps come on board with a ministry that expresses all that Jesus is asking of us in this gospel story.

The Epistle for today: reminds us that in service for Christ there can be suffering.

'Don't throw away your confidence', it says, *'you will be richly rewarded'*. We need to persevere in our Christian lives.....remembering always to keep our hearts and minds set on God's greater plan for us....our salvation.hold on tight God is with you.

I don't know about you but I can recall times I have suffered because of my faith, suffered because I am a Christian, a follower of Christ and at times it's been very hard, but I have never lost my relationship with Christ. My love of the Lord is far greater than the suffering I may have to endure.

We are people of faith, we have an aim and a goal in our Christian life....a life that is in itself a way of life. This faith means we are certain....don't let that certainty be shaken....we know that Jesus died so we could have life.

For Jesus sake.

For your sake.....go boldly and with courage into the world waving the banner of peace and love.

Max Lucado says of Matthew 5:3: Blessed are the dirt-poor, nothing to give, trapped in a corner, destitute, diseased, says Jesus. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

These are the people I spend my God given love and service on through ministry. Disadvantaged, isolated, lonely, marginalised and simply needing a hand to just live out a day at a time. Ministry with the Aboriginal Church, the school for children with profound and challenging disabilities, the frail elderly.

Because of our faith we can step boldly before the Lord in prayer and boldly into the world in service and witness.

Support for us as we serve our Lord comes through many texts of the bible, promises made to us by God and today we read one special one in the words of **psalm 46:**

'Be still and know that I am God.'

Do you know this was the verse that the soldiers of the war said before they went into battle? *'The Lord Almighty is with us...the God of Jacob is our fortress'*

Be still and know that I am God.'

God is our protection and strength. He ALWAYS helps in time of trouble. He provides safety, security and peace. Nothing occurs beyond the reach of God's power providing we have awareness of it.....

The Lord All Powerful is **with us. This was** the Chant of the early believers of God.....*God is with us*.....a chant of celebration, without him nothing can be achieved, without him, no joy, no truth, no life.

This chant *'God is with us'* became *'Immanuel is with us'*..... and that became the name we gave to our saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ ,and through Jesus, the light of God's help has broken.

Through him the river of life flows to bring faith, hope and love.

May others see us for who we are and what we represent.....The peace makers.....The followers of the Christ.

Amen

