



## THOUGHTS FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

14 NOVEMBER 2021

*Room in heaven*

I Thessalonians 4:13-18, John 14:1-7

Last year I was thinking at this time about the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day. In thinking of those people who lost their lives in the Second World War the tragedy of their loss, especially at this distance in time, has a discernible element of glory about it as we recognise they gave their lives in a noble cause, a cause that led to victory

This year has seen the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks by aeroplane on targets in the United States, which, as we know, led to the invasion of Afghanistan by US and other NATO forces, including the British. This year has also seen the end of that conflict, with the withdrawal of the remaining NATO forces. Inasmuch as Al Qaeda have been removed from Afghanistan, and their former leader, Osama bin Laden was eventually found and killed in Pakistan, so fulfilling the initial purpose of the invasion, I suppose it can be counted as a success – but it does not really feel like much of a victory, and some have wondered if it was worth losing over 450 British lives over it (to say nothing of the thousands of lives of other nationals).

Why mention this here, when Darley Abbey lost none of its children in Afghanistan? Because I know we had at least one of ‘our’ children on service there, and I once had the privilege to overhear his mother’s anxious concern being expressed whilst he was away. It was at a time when the death toll was mounting, and to be deployed to Afghanistan seemed to be in a place of maximum jeopardy.

Hearing her brought home to me the aching, gnawing, visceral sense of dread that must have gripped the hearts of so many parents of children serving in battles over the years, and I realised that those feelings, that sense, would apply in the hearts of both victors and vanquished alike. In this case, thankfully, the soldier came home in one piece, but the insight into the frightful anxiety has left its mark on my memory.

Our generally comfortable lives seem far removed from these horrors, and it is only occasionally that we are forced to confront them. Perhaps the recent plague months have taught us something in this respect – a time when sudden death did seem to lurk round every corner?

As we remember all those who have died in war, especially those from this place, and those we know, we can take encouragement from our readings today. Saint Paul is writing to the Thessalonian church to reassure them that there is a realistic hope in eternal life for those who have died – this is a basic tenet of the Christian faith. This is a point reinforced in Saint John’s Gospel, where Jesus seeks to reassure his followers that there is ample room in heaven, with God, for all who follow him. So, in our commemoration we have the assurance that those who have died and who we remember today are lodged now with God, in the glory of his presence.

Clive Lemmon