



THOUGHTS FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

8 NOVEMBER 2020

Time, like an ever rolling stream

I Thessalonians 4: 13-18, John 15:9-17

A relatively new head teacher, having experienced Remembrance-tide at his new school one year, suggested that the commemoration might be quietly dropped the next year, because the events being commemorated were so long ago in the past, and no longer relevant. One of the pupils got up a petition to oppose the plan, and remembrance commemorations went on. The school was King Edward VII, Sheffield, the pupil was my chum, Jim Rogers, and the year was 1967. Recollecting this 53 years later at another Remembrance-tide makes me very conscious of the passing of time.

As did the significant anniversaries we have marked this year, the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in first VE Day and then VJ Day. I was moved by the national commemorations of these three anniversaries, particularly because of the constraints imposed on them by the Covid-19 regulations. I recalled the way Darley Abbey marked the 50th anniversary of VE Day 25 years ago, with a celebration in the, then newly, extended Village Hall, with no such constraints. Then it struck me that these Second World War events were separated by five years. Five years of jeopardy, hardship and uncertainty, having little idea what the future might hold. So it was also with the four years of the Great War. Covid-19 has already brought us seven months of jeopardy and uncertainty, and for many already a lot of hardship, and that might give us more of an insight into the misery and sacrifice of war.

In 1975 I was staying with a university friend of mine at his family home in Collingham over the Remembrance Sunday weekend. My friend, being 22 or 23 years old at that time had been asked by the Vicar to lay a wreath at the village war memorial. He remarked to me afterwards that, having reminded himself of the ages of those commemorated on that memorial, he was substantially older than the majority of them. Old at 23!

These tricks of time that pull me up short this Remembrance Sunday make me realise the importance of the truths in our first lesson this morning, from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians – in God's love we are all caught up together, those of us alive today, and those who have died, whether recently or long ago.

Today's reading from S. John's Gospel has the familiar command to love one-another as God loves us, and reminds us that no human being can demonstrate his love more than by laying down his life for his friends.

So we remember today, both as a duty and as a joy, those who have died in war, in service of their fellows, and we pray that we may be joined with them ever more closely in God's kingdom of love.

Clive Lemmon