

'Remembering' - Remembrance Sunday – SJD - 13/11/16 – Luke 17: 11- 19

We are here today to remember those who, for our tomorrows willingly gave of their todays.¹ But this begs the question what it means to really remember. Is standing in silence for two minutes each armistice day sufficient? I wish to suggest it is not. Indeed I go further and suggest that such an act alone is no more a true act of Remembrance than saying 'I love you' is an act of life commitment or merely sitting in a Church is an act of worship. For remembrance to be of value it must bring the stories of the past into the present and affect change in us. It must influence positively the way we see things and act upon them.

In the Gospel story we heard, we find three facets of true remembrance. You may recall that 10 people, suffering from leprosy, were living on the margins of society both literally, (they were in the borders of Galilee and Samaria), and socially, (they had to keep a fixed distance away from all unaffected people). Jesus responded to their appeal for mercy but, respecting their dignity, chose not to heal immediately, rather allowed them to be healed as they journeyed to the priest, the only one legally able to declare them healed. It is, however, the one who returned to thank Jesus who gives us the picture of true remembrance.

1. **Recognition** – All ten presumably recognise their healing but this lone man sees beyond the physical healing to the debt he owes to Jesus. Jesus did not have to respond to this man's need, after all the man was a Samaritan², a foreigner and as Jesus had made clear several times his ministry was first to the House of Israel.³ There is a recognition here by the man of an unselfish act from which he was benefitting – and so with us as we reflect on what past men and women have given from which we benefit greatly. Such recognition is the first stage of remembrance.
2. **Response** – Upon discovering his healing the man sets off to find Jesus to give him thanks. His physical body has been transformed but we see also a mental and emotional response. We see a response of gratitude – throwing himself at Jesus' feet⁴ and this even before he has been legally declared healed. We too as we enter into the process of remembering should find a desire to respond. This is a sign to us that the process is real. As we respond, so the process of remembrance goes deeper into our being and helps change the person we are – for the better. Perhaps we may seek more positively to support those who continue to defend our liberty and values. Certainly we have our eyes opened to a larger world and its needs than the one we currently inhabit with all the possibilities that includes.
3. **Reward**. The final element is that true remembrance brings its own reward. This man received a double blessing – both physical healing and a spiritual awakening as his faith increased and is praised by Jesus himself. As was common with Jesus, he is sent on his way, no doubt praising God, proclaiming Jesus and serving others. It is no mystery that those who discover such things discover they bring a new liberty and joy. But whatever our positive response in remembering it will free us to see ourselves and others in a new and clearer light. We may even see that any and all human sacrificial act speaks of our God given nature which we see perfectly portrayed in the person of Jesus Christ and the act of sacrifice he made for us on the Cross. He too ultimately received his reward – a position of power and authority at the right hand of God and we too will receive God's blessing and a deepened awareness of who we are, as we enter into an act of remembrance and respond.

May each of us be given greater insight of ourselves and what we can become in Christ. Amen

¹ This poem is the Kohima Epitaph composed by Major John Etty-Leal and is engraved on the War Memorial to commemorate the men of the British 2nd Division who fell in the Battle of Kohima in 1944.

² Verse 16, 17

³ See e.g. Matthew 15:24

⁴ See verse 16