

by
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After a number of years, I have been asked to lead a Remembrance Service at Michaelstow. My prayer list will have to be extended to ask our Lord to wipe away the cobwebs of unfamiliarity and focus on the Fallen. One of my difficulties is that I have only one sermon appropriate for the occasion. Here it is:-



People of my age often have no medals to wear, unless they volunteered for military service. That is because millions have fallen in the struggles to restore a level of peace in this world. A peace in which my peers and I were born, raised and live. The immense debt that we owe to the Fallen is the peace and tranquillity for which they died. If there were a medal acknowledging that debt, it would be worn with great pride and gratitude.

Recently I was watching Act Three in Verdi's "Macbeth", when Macbeth became King, having murdered his way to the crown with his wife's encouragement. At the celebration, he saw the ghost of his friend Banquo, who was killed recently on his orders. Horrified, he twice interrupted his wife's aria in a mad seizure. Although he was pacified by Lady Macbeth, it seemed that his power so recently gained was already beginning to decay.

I realised once more how the Bard of Avon had brilliantly depicted the rise and fall of the tyrant, and how that terrible cycle of cruelty and domination had been repeated over the centuries. The list is long. Indeed that madness has seized Russia now, a people that has given us so much in both the arts and the sheer size of their past sacrifices in the cause of peace.

It is a great pity that Shakespeare does not appear to be taught in Russia.

Remembering the millions - let's be honest - whose lives were torn from them, were they military or civil, it is the beginning of John's 14th chapter which is appropriate now. It is frequently read at funerals, linking as it does the crippling pain of losing someone dearly loved with the hope of resurrection to the life beyond this one. Both versions are attached.

When one looks at the photo of war graves, the sheer number of dead is numbing. Remember that this is just one of many in most countries. Now we weep at the carnage in Ukraine being uncovered daily.

The cruelty of this wonderful life is that it never stands still. Yes, sometimes we are very glad that life has moved on, that sickness and pain have been overcome. But we are creatures of time, and whatever we might wish or even do, today's beautiful newly born will be next century's grandparents. As it might be said, today's beauty of Creation will be thrown on tomorrow's bonfire.

As time goes on we look with increasing hope to the promises of our Lord. Religion and its concept of an afterlife was rubbished by Marx as the opium of the masses, and

it is true that life after death is the best kept secret, despite the attentions of Madam Arcarty (*Blithe Spirit*) and her colleagues. To the Christian, there is not so much of a problem, given the Resurrection of Jesus, but it is understandable that our belief is supported with hope.

John's 14th chapter tells us plainly and without circumlocution, that Jesus was the human presence of God. *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"*

There are times when I read scripture and I try to picture the people involved. They were human, emotional, fallible, they laughed and cried as we do. Whenever I hear John 14, and the request from Philip, I imagine that Jesus looked to Heaven, shook his head and clutched his brow. *"Philip, Philip, how long have you been with me? Have you not listened? Or understood?"*

I would be surprised if Philip didn't get ribbed about his question at the time, but what a wonderful response it drew from our Lord!



AMEN

New Revised Standard Version

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves.

King James Version

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

⁴ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

⁵ Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. ⁷ If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

⁸ Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

¹⁰ Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.