

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : November 10th, 2019
“Remembrance”

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2019

Today on this Remembrance Sunday we reflect in our readings on the basic Christian beliefs of life and death – and in particular the tricky question of life after death. What do we honestly believe? How do we imagine life after death might be?

Of course, in truth, we really don't know – we can only imagine in our limited human way. But perhaps we are given some “tasters” as someone once put it. You know, tasters are those things they're always trying to get you to try in a supermarket – chocolate, cheese, whatever. The tasters are the same as the main block from which they are cut and so we know they will taste the same. Although we haven't been to heaven, God gives us lots of little tasters which help us find out what it is like. Whenever we sense Christ giving us peace of mind or a sense of joy, or the sudden certainty that God really loves and cares for us, perhaps we are getting a taster of life after death. What we will slowly but surely find is that the more we live in God's company and follow Jesus of Nazareth, the more of heaven we will have in our lives even before we die.

Now of course many think Christians are deluded for believing that there could possibly be life after death. Many people, Christians included it has to be admitted, can't see beyond death and so they don't think there can be anything like heaven. But I suppose if I had never seen daffodils flowering in spring, I would probably think people were crazy burying dry bulbs in the earth at this time of year. But because I have seen what happens to those bulbs, I trust that they won't just rot in the ground.

Of course, we have little exact idea of what our resurrection life will be like, but what we do hope and trust is that it will be full of joy and peace and love. For Jesus of Nazareth tells us that there is life after death, and of course many people encountered him alive after he had died. So I don't think we should consider ourselves deluded for believing that there is life after death; we live in hope that it is true and we may already have tasted small bits of how it will be.

All of this is important. It is important that Christians should try to set an example to those around them about what happens when we die. It is important that we should show we are as accepting as we can humanly be of death – and of a new life after death. It is important that we each try to come to terms with our eventual death – and then get on with the rest of our living.

As Christians we are encouraged to stand firm and stick to the teachings we have been handed down faithfully through the generations in an unbroken line which can be traced back to Christ himself. That will help us to decide what we believe, and we will then be ready to enter the glorious heritage of resurrection life in heaven – as have countless Christians done before us and as countless Christians will after us.

It is why this evening's All Souls Service is one of the most significant services we hold here at Christ Church – the opportunity to welcome strangers and visitors to come and mourn and remember their loved ones. During the service everyone is invited to come forward and light a candle – and they almost all do – lighting a small symbol of hope at a dark time in their lives as they mourn the death of someone they love and as they cling onto the hope of life after death.

And for that and for our support for them, thanks be to God. Amen.