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Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : Third Sunday before Advent
Sunday 6th November 2022

THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT, 6 NOVEMBER 2022

Preached by Michael Burns

November is very much the month of remembering. Last Sunday we celebrated the Feast of All Saints, a day when all the saints can be remembered whether they have their own special day or not. Then November 2nd is All Souls Day when the Church remembers the millions of ordinary people of every land who have died. Finally next week is Remembrance Sunday, the national day of remembering those who have given their lives in the service of humanity.

On that day, too, we have our annual Memorial Service when I invite those families whose loved ones have died during the past year to come and remember. It is always a poignant service and one that is appreciated by many. For it is in remembering our loved ones that gives us all hope for the future because human beings so often build their lives upon those who have gone before. I am the person who I am because of my parents and they are who they were because of their parents – my grandparents – and so on.

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

Of course, in truth, we don't really 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 or 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, 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 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. That sort of image helps me and might help you?

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 has told us that there really is life after death, and many people indeed encountered him alive after he had died. So we shouldn't consider ourselves deluded for believing that there is life after death; many believe it to be true and may already have tasted bits of how good 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.