



Sunday, 10 November 2019 – Remembrance Sunday
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: Old Testament Job 19: 23-27, Gospel of St Luke 20: 27-38
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

The best of British!

It doesn't matter how many times I see the repeats on television 'Dad's Army' still makes me laugh. The casting is so well done that it's possible to recognise certain traits of people we know and, maybe, even those of ourselves. There's self-important Mainwaring, well-connected Wilson, over-eager Jones, wide-boy Walker and mummy's boy Pike. Sadly, at my most impatient, I catch myself imitating crochety the Reverend Timothy Farthing

'Oh! What is it now Mr Yeatman? Can't you see, I'm trying to write my sermon!'

The amusing, diverse group of actors also represented the very best of British public-spiritedness: ready to fight the aggressor irrespective of their age or background. Sadly, these days, celebrity status is often desired above offering faithful, public service.

Underhand tactics

Today's Gospel begins in a similar rambling way to one of Corporal Jones convoluted war-time stories. But whereas Jones' stories were designed to make us laugh, there is nothing humorous about the Sadducees anecdote. Their query, on a point of Jewish Law, in connection with the resurrection of the dead, is designed to entrap Jesus and cause conflict by a combination of psychological and spiritual warfare. It's salutary to speculate if much has changed in our society over the years?

Hidden oppression

Some of you here this morning served Her Majesty the Queen in her armed forces or been members of the merchant navy. Most of us, however, have largely lived peaceably without first-hand experience of the conflict of war. But, in our society today, do we really live in total freedom? There are still those who will try to entrap others to exploit them by controlling action, for example, people traffickers. Whatever the situation, we are all subjected to coercive pressures; our young people are entrapped by social media trolls making them feel anxious that they might not display the perceived positive body image. We older ones may also be prey to image, thinking:

"Am I sufficiently affluent, powerful, savvy or well-connected?"

We may even be our own harshest critic. By way of illustration, I read recently about Irish writer Sinead Burke who has the condition of dwarfism. She commented:

"My challenges are obvious you only need to look at me. But, for the rest of you of average height, your challenges are not necessarily written on your skin."

How true for even in these days of openness about mental health issues many people hesitate to admit to a problem for fear of expressing weakness giving a flawed image. How

hard it is to accept that under the skin none of us is perfect. Did our young St Andrew's men sacrifice their lives in two world wars, only for us today to be enslaved by the laws of image?

When the law is an ass!

Laws, inevitably, are restrictive to individualism setting limits on the way that we live seeking to effect order by conformity. In the Gospel the Sadducees with their attempt at entrapment epitomise when the law is an ass! Well-schooled in Jewish religious law they aim for uniformity in peoples' relationship with God, rather than rejoice that he created diversity, hence, they find Jesus anti-establishment. He brushes aside their straight-jacket of religious rules knowing that God created the Sabbath for people and not people for the Sabbath. Lovingly, his law enables us to live in the skin that we're in, able to discern by his example what is life-giving or life-limiting. Jesus tells the Sadducees that the children of God have a personal relationship with him and so, are not dead but alive. Godfray Guilbert's reading from Job illustrates this graphically, "After my skin has been destroyed by death, yet I shall see God". How is this possible? Human law especially extremism depersonalises but God's law is written with his love giving life in all its fullness, both in this life and the next, to those who believe in him.

Costly redemptive freedom

During two world wars and countless conflicts since, young lives have been sacrificed, their bodies brutalised by bullets and bombs. And yet ... the only image that redeems perfectly, is that of our Saviour, naked, disfigured and nailed to a cross with his heart pouring out love to humanity. Costly love, yet, when all else passes away love never dies. We know this ourselves for when those we love die, yet we still go on loving them: it sustains, replenishes and raises us up. It's the same with faith, Job who suffered every image ignominy yet with the confidence of belief was able to say,

"I know that my redeemer lives."

The love of God, manifested by our redeemer, is the one image that heals wounds of the body, mind and spirit. Selflessness is that one image which our Lord asks us to adopt, in times of war and in peace, by loving God with our whole heart and our neighbour as our self. Selfless sacrifice was epitomised by those St Andrew's men we honour today and begs one question of us all:

Am I living in the freedom of God's love?

Amen.