

ANZAC DAY MESSAGE 25TH April 2010

Sermon Preached By Canon Jim Holbeck At St Thomas' Anglican Church, Port Macquarie On Sun 25th April 2010. (Anzac Day)
Reading: Jn 15:9-17. Topic: "Loving One Another With God's Love"

(Jn 15:13) Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. This verse has often been quoted on Anzac Day. It reminds us of those who were willing to lay down their lives for their country, their family and friends.

One of the sad things I find in life is driving through the country areas of Australia and finding monuments to those men and women who went to war over the last 100 years. It is tragic to see how so many young people from small districts died in war and to wonder how many local families and communities were decimated by those losses.

Today on Anzac Day we thank God for every person who has risked or given their lives for their friends, especially in war. But a day like Anzac Day raises a number of questions.

1). WHY DO WARS KEEP HAPPENING?

World War 1 was quoted as being "The war to end all wars." But it didn't and there have been numerous wars ever since. However we shouldn't be surprised when wars break out. They happen because many people in our world have no time for God and they try to live by their own wisdom and in their own strength.

The Bible teaches that from birth we humans have a natural bias towards evil. We don't need lessons in how to sin, it comes naturally. It explains why humans can sometimes act inhumanely towards fellow humans especially in conflict and war, but even towards members of their own families.

Jesus was very aware of what we can become when we don't depend on God. He taught in Mark 7:21-23, *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from*

within, and they defile a person." It is "natural" for people to express such behaviour when God is not in control of their lives.

James wrote that wars arise from within us. They stem from covetousness and greed. *Jas 4:1 What is the source of the wars and the fights among you? Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you? Jas 4:2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.*

- That is the sad sorry situation in our world today as so many individuals, families, nations are
 - out of touch with God and as a result
 - are motivated by covetousness and greed.
- They act aggressively to get what they want, whether it's through deception, fraud, intimidation, rape or murder. It's the attitude "I'll get what I want, no matter who gets hurt in the process."

2). DO WARS HAVE TO HAPPEN? ARE THEY INEVITABLE?

The BAD NEWS is that until humans turn to God and trust Him, they live as His enemies.

- They don't want Him to rule over them.
- They don't want to live by His commandments
- They want to be free to do what they want to do

James wrote about the danger of living in the world without trusting God. All people are meant to be living in a humble relationship with God their creator. But many have scorned Him and taken up with others in the world who think and do likewise. (It could be described as "spiritual adultery").

James therefore says, *Jas 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

It's obvious that there are many people in every nation who see God as an enemy and live as His enemies.

The GOOD NEWS is that humans can become different. They can live lives motivated by love for God and by love for

We might say, "I'd love to be able reach out in love to other people. But I just can't do it." That may be true. But the great thing is that God can do it through you, if you let Him. You can offer yourself to Him so that He can pour His love into you and through you.

God wants to love others through us

God has someone out there (perhaps many people) whom He is wanting to love especially through you. You can offer yourself to Him so that He can pour His love into you and through you, to bless that person, (those people) with His love.

Will you become an instrument He can use to impart His love to them? You can pray to be filled with the Spirit of God and with God's love so that He can love those people through you.

A PRAYER. (You might like to pray this prayer with me).

Lord on this Anzac Day we thank you for all those who were willing to lay down their lives for us so that we might be free.

I thank you especially today for Jesus who laid down His life for us on the cross so that we might be forgiven and walk in freedom.

I invite You Lord Jesus to come into every area of my life and fill me with Your Holy Spirit.

By Your Spirit pour out the love of God into every part of my heart and life so that You can love others through me.

Show me the people whom You want me to love, and love them through me as I offer myself to you.

I thank you now by faith for what You will do in me and for what You will do through me, as You fill me with Your presence and with your self-giving love. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

AMEN

How to be filled with the love of God

We need to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.* This is not a one off experience. For the Greek students among us, it is a present continuous passive verb. It has to keep happening. It isn't something we can do to ourselves. God has to do it to us. But we need to keep on offering ourselves to Him to be filled afresh moment by moment.

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you are filled with the presence of God by His Spirit. You come under God's control by His Holy Spirit. You allow God to release His own (divine agape) love into you and through you. You allow God to love people through you.

People can learn to love

I think of one woman who when she was about 4 years of age was taken by her mother into town to go shopping. But instead her mother just left in the street and walked out of her life for ever. So as a result she didn't like women. Later as a young woman, she was gang raped by a number of men. She didn't trust men.

She eventually married and her husband later tried to strangle her to death. She survived. She was in a real physical and emotional mess when we met her. Unable to love or to receive love, almost paralysed and in constant pain through a terrible accident.

But she opened her heart to Jesus. She was able to forgive all those who had hurt her over the years. She prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and God filled her with His love. (And brought her miraculous physical healing as well as deep emotional healing).

She has become one of the most loving people I have ever met. She has a wonderful "ministry of hugs". Anyone who needs a hug can be warmly enveloped in her arms. She loves with the love of God.

You and I can change as well. We might have been brought up in an unloving environment or in a family which didn't express love.

one another. They can seek to live by the 2 Great Commands Jesus taught His people, namely to love God with all their being and to love their neighbour as themselves.

Look again at our Gospel reading from Jn 15:13-14. *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14) You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

When we turn to God through Jesus Christ, and begin to obey Him, we become His friends. We are no longer His enemies. Jesus said, (Jn 15:15) *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* What an incredible truth that the God of all creation treats us as His friends when we turn back to Him through Jesus Christ.

God provides for the needs of His friends.

Jesus promised to give His friends what they need. (Jn 15:16) *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*

That is, God is saying to His friends, *You don't have to be covetous and greedy, I will supply what you need. You don't have to fight and to wage war to get what you need. I will give you whatever need you ask of me.*

So wars and conflicts don't have to happen when humans open their hearts to God and become His friends and through Him become friends of one another.

3). HOW CAN WARS BE AVERTED? God's Solution, LOVE

Our world is in need of love. The composer Burt Bacharach wrote many years ago, *what the world needs now is love, sweet love*
It's the only thing that there's just too little of

Jesus told us that not only does the world need love, but He commands us as His friends to love one another. (Jn 13:34) *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I*

have loved you, you also are to love one another. AND Jn 15:12) "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. AND Jn 15:17) These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

You and I can help solve the world's problems. How?

By loving others. When you really love someone you don't go out of your way to hurt them.

You won't commit adultery with their spouse.

You won't do them harm or murder them.

You won't steal from them their property or their reputation. (good name).

You won't covet what they have. You'll be happy for them to have what they have, as you are grateful to God for what you have.

Paul put it like this, Rom 13:9 For the commandments, (negative commandments) "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word (positive commandment): "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. So there you have the solution. If we love one another we can help change the world for good.

Is there still a problem? Yes there is. How can you love in such a way that it makes a difference in the world?

4). HOW CAN WE LOVE OTHERS? God's Love in and through us

What is God's love? The new Testament word is agapē. It means love for the unlovely, the unworthy, the undeserving.

Perhaps the best definition is "seeking the best interests of the other person" as shown in Jesus' death on our behalf. *1Jn 3:16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.*

God's love is not just a feeling though it may lead to feelings. It is a commitment to seek the best interests of the other person regardless of how you feel about them.

How then can we receive His love and learn to express it in our relationships?

i). God imparts His love TO us in the gift of His Spirit

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control

It is God's presence in us by the Holy Spirit which enables us to love others. Love is the outward expression or fruit of the life of God within us imparted by His Holy Spirit.

ii). God imparts His love THROUGH US by His Spirit

God enables us to love. He gives us His love to share with others. Look at *Rom 5:5 ... God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

We can become vessels into whom the love of God flows so we can experience it, AND through whom it flows so that others can experience it through us.

The outpouring of this love is indeed an outpouring not just a trickle. The word could be translated as "shed abroad" or to "pour out generously" like a gusher. It is used in *Jn 7:38* to describe the flow of living waters from the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*

It means that true Christian love (God's love) never runs out. His love can keep flowing through us when the going gets tough and humanly speaking when it seems to be so hard to love. But in Christian love we continue seeking the best interests of that other person (or people) regardless of how we feel.

There remains a final question to be answered. How can we be filled with this love?