

Anzac Day Sermon – 25.04.21
Delivered by Rev'd Selina McMahon

How good is your memory?

Red yellow green brown scarlet black ochre peach ruby olive violet fawn lilac gold chocolate mauve cream crimson silver rose azure lemon russet grey purple white pink orange BLUE!

Those words come from the musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and is a list that's not easy to remember without practice.

Some people can remember lists like that quickly and easily – we often (incorrectly) say that they have a photographic memory. For others (like me), they need to study. And to try, and try and try again until they get it right. I am always overwhelmed by people who are required to retain vast amounts of essential information – medical staff, for example, for whom, remembering the correct dose of the correct drug for the correct illness is a matter of life and death: me? I struggle to remember what colour car I drive.

And I suspect I am not alone.

Now that list was written in 1968. My car, I drove here only today. How much harder is it to remember things that happened before we were born? And why should we continue to carry out such acts of remembrance such as those that take place on ANZAC day?

I think it's for two main reasons.

Firstly, it's the only real way we have to thank these women and men who died that we might enjoy the lives we have today. Without their sacrifices – sacrifices they made perhaps without understanding why – we would have very different lives.

It's like the butterfly effect: at midday a butterfly in the Amazonian rain forest decides to take flight. Because of its small action, the air currents in that region are changed. These changes affect still larger currents which are all a part of this global weather system – as a result we have a sunny day on the Gold Coast and can enjoy the beach.

But....

If that butterfly had taken off a minute earlier, the currents would have been different. The effects would have been different. As a result, we may have had rain on the Gold Coast: no swimming today. A small difference can have a major effect when magnified to global proportions.

When we think of those who have fallen in combat, we realise that the huge personal sacrifices they made, added together, have made a huge difference to our lives today. Without them we would not have the freedoms we enjoy today. Without them we would not enjoy the livelihoods we have today.

And it doesn't matter which war we are talking about either – each and every battle has had the same implications – our lives are altered by the actions of each and every person around us, no matter how trivial they may seem, whether during periods of combat or peace. That's why we need to always be aware that our words, our actions, every single movement we make affects every other person on this planet. Most of these effects will be small – but not all of them. We must always be careful that our choices do not adversely affect others.

So, by remembering the sacrifices that were made so many years ago – as well as those being made each day where conflict still takes place – we ensure that we are thanking those who have given us the lives we now enjoy.

But we also remember for another reason and that is to learn. We need to learn from the past in order to shape the future. We learn of the futility of warfare, the pain and heartbreak caused to families who will not get their beloved spouses or children back to have and hold because they have been killed in the bitter glory of battle. We learn that the conflicts on the small scale such as our petty arguments over what is right or wrong in our homes, our towns, our churches, cause nothing but heartbreak, pain and further conflict.

We need to learn the better way. The way of peace. Of diplomacy. Of friendship.

We need to learn, that there is a much better way.

It is the way that led to one man, two thousand years ago, getting up on the cross for offences he had not committed. It is the way that has driven men and women to give up their lives for others throughout the centuries.

Today, we remember. We remember and give thanks. And we, once again, commit ourselves to the promise that we will not allow conflict to grab the world ever again. Failure is not an option.