

**An Address by the Rev'd Hayley Matthews, Rector of Holy Innocents' Fallowfield
and Trustee of the William Temple Foundation
at William Temple Parish Church
Sunday 9th November 2014
to mark the 70th anniversary of William Temple's death.**

All being paid the same in the market place (Matthew 20) plus:

'Self-interest is always exercising its disturbing influence, not less (though more nobly) when it is forcibly repudiated than when it is accepted as the guide of conduct.

Anyhow, we all know that Politics is largely a contention between different groups of self-interest - e.g. the Haves and the Have-nots. It may be the function of the Church to lead people to a purely disinterested virtue (though this is at least debatable); a statesman who supposes that a mass of citizens can be governed without appeal to their self-interest is living in dreamland and is a public menace. The art of government in fact is the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands. Thus it is enacted that thieves should be sent to prison; but the object of the law is not to imprison thieves, but to make men reflect that even if they are not honest they are still prudent to behave honestly... for the law, and the social order, is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.' WT Christianity and Social order, pps 65-6.

Today on Remembrance Sunday, we particularly remember the costly sacrifice of many men and women who courageously laid down their lives for the sake of their Queen and Government, their country, their own families and their personal hopes and dreams for a peaceful future.

Yet every Sunday morning a Remembrance service is held here, and in churches all over the country as we remember the costly sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who laid His life down for each and everyone of us, in the face the enemy of all; the power of evil, and all that is oppressive, cruel, hateful and poisonous bringing misery, grief, shock, and black, bleak depression to many; one person giving all so that the ultimate enemy – death – could be defeated. Every week we hear the immortal words, 'He blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body broken for you, eat this in

remembrance of me.” Tacking the cup of wine He gave thanks and said, “Drink this all of you, this is the blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins, do this in remembrance of me.” ’ And each of us receive the same reward, whether it is for the first or the hundredth time we have every joined together in Holy Communion: there is no pecking order, no one more deserving than the other – all receive the ultimate reward in and through Christ our Lord. Temple knew and understood that this was the crux of life as we know it, and he was not afraid of clarity in sharing those beliefs.

Yet the kind of social and legal authority that Temple speaks that will whip us into shape and turn us to Godly living sits rather uncomfortably with us these days, doesn’t it? It reminds me of when I felt called to join the Territorial Army or ‘Toy Army’ as the Regulars affectionately called us - I wondered what on earth the Lord could be thinking of. There I was, a young lady who didn’t drink, smoke, swear or stay up past 10 o’clock sitting in the back of a freezing cold 4-tonner being ferried across the border to an even colder Yorkshire, listening to some of the most offensive jokes a woman could ever hope to hear.

Had the Lord run mad? Why on EARTH would He want me to be subjected to such sinful behaviour? But over the following year, as I was fully trained as a Combat Infantry Soldier, Marksman and Signaller I learned what it truly meant to be a soldier. And it meant pretty much what Jesus’ parable of the market place teaches us; it meant ‘Last man in!’

Now believe it or not, I used to be pre-tty fit – oh yes! Two years running I was part of a four person mixed team that beat all-males teams from all across Europe in the Annual International RFA International Military Skills Competition – yes, ladies, did you hear that? Two females, two males and we were the only team to actually complete the Combat Exercise - all the blokes got well and truly bumped! The first year I was the fastest person across the assault course – in fact I was so fast they had to check the stopwatch with a Seconder because the Marshall couldn’t believe it. I mean, a woman?!

But did that make ME the winner? Did I receive any special acknowledgement for my efforts? An extra medal perhaps? Was I able to sit down with a nice cold drink and laugh as people flung themselves off 10ft walls and leapt for ropes just out of arms’ reach, or cried when they reached the 30ft water jump?

No, do you know what I had to do? I had to go right back to the start, catch up with the last person and run with them, dragging them, pushing them, pulling them, grabbing ropes for them, yelling encouragement – beasting it's called in the Army – and when that person was under the last cargo net, I ran back again to the current last man, because in the Army, you're not a person, you're a unit. You haven't achieved anything until your last man is in, and then you shout, 'Last man in!' and your time stops. No matter how long it takes, or what it takes, *all receive the same reward*. You are a unit and you work, sleep, play and operate as a unit. That's right, I even had to learn to down a pint along with the best of them!

The wonderful thing about this is the sheer co-operation and collaboration between a group of diverse people, some of whom wouldn't have been able to stand each other in any other situation. Everyone gets a nick-name; everyone gets laughed at; everyone's faults and strong points are openly acknowledged, and one has the opportunity to say, "OK mate, you're really doing my head in now, back off." An hour later you might be paired up on duty with that very same person and enjoy having a laugh together. You *cannot* hold a grudge with someone that your life depends upon, and you cannot waste time working out where you are in the pecking order, because irrespective of how good or bad you are, you are one amongst equals.

Every year we had our annual Combat Fitness Test. To the uninitiated among you, it means wearing full combat uniform including weapons, webbing, a 25kg rucksack, army boots – no comfy trainers - and your helmet. You could overheat just looking at it. Your kit is weighed to ensure it is heavy enough and then you get to run for 8 miles in 1hr 55mins. We had the joy of using dirt hills in Catterick that are so steep you swear the tendons behind your ankles will snap. We ran as a platoon, so that's well over 90 bodies in ranks of 5 having to keep step with one another no matter how tall, short, fat, lean or fit one is from another. You are one among equals.

Because if one fails, all fail. Oh if only our politicians could grasp that idea with both hands, as Temple did.

One year, a lad was struggling, so we swapped his position to the middle. The soldiers either side tied their webbing to him to pull him along, the soldier behind him pushed against his rucksack, I carried his weapon, and another soldier carried his helmet and we stuck it back on him just before the Officers came into view at the finishing line. The lads who had been pulling him were exhausted by the end of the run while the soldier next to me was helping me to balance the two rifles I was carrying and keep my pace going. The CFT is a killer without any extra weight. But we made our time

– just – to shouts of victory. Later in the bar, everyone, said, ‘Well done mate, you did so well to get through that,’ to the guy who had been struggling. No one mentioned the support he’d received – it went without saying, and neither did anyone spend the evening being a martyr about how costly it had been to help him. The young squaddie went to bed that night with his pride intact, having completed something clearly gruelling to him, yet knowing he was a crucial part of a team that wouldn’t let him be left behind. He must have felt on top of the world!

He wasn’t humiliated, or dragged through extra tests and interviews. He wasn’t called names and plastered all over the newspapers. He didn’t receive a partial reward, or have to worry about whether or not he’d get to stay in the game at all; he received his reward as one amongst equals. Just as Temple dreamed of as Beveridge’s Welfare State came fully into being after the second world war, as the NHS and Education Reforms continued to offer hope to the children of every family, no matter where or to whom they were born, everyone had the same rights to be fed, educated, housed and offered healthcare. Finally, the conservative belief that we are all born to our station, and must know our place, was overthrown in what must have seemed like a Christian revolution. At last, the State was able to share a vision of a diverse people who had the same needs, whether or not they had the same means to pay for them.

And just as I began to see beyond the drinking and swearing of the male squaddies having experienced military life – after all, you can get that in any half-decent choir - I also began to see the church and society in a new light and in contrast to the team spirit of the Army noticed people ambitious for position. People intent on destroying unity given more television airtime than people who genuinely care about the state of the environment and the impact of benefit reforms.

I have rarely seen anything like the camaraderie, trust and resilience that even the smallest of sections in the army could boast. I knew, no matter how many dodgy jokes and unsavoury magazines were passed between the lads that there wasn’t one of them I couldn’t trust my life with. It’s funny, but I think that that was exactly what the Lord wanted me to learn; how to see beyond first impressions to find the motivating passions in a person’s heart; how to be a real solid family with a group of people you wouldn’t pick if your life depended upon it, and how to love them and be around them when it does. I learned how to find the Christlight in everyone; how to work with people you don’t particularly gel with; how to focus on a higher goal and care more about that than your own pet hates; how to have a big bust-up with somebody one minute and then cover their back against enemy fire the next; being able to let go of resentments, forgetting about being independent but

being a crucial part of the whole; giving up good old fashioned vainglory of being Number One for the joy of singing 'We are the Champions' with 29 other soldiers, knowing that you did it together, whether or not you ended up running the assault course twice over or were dragged through by the skin of your teeth.

So, today we remember those who have laid their lives down for us, known and unknown, man and God, and William Temple in particular. We look forward to the vision of peace among all nations and how we can play our part in working towards that, and we hope in the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus Christ won for us on the cross; the gifts that enable the reconciliation of all people to God and to one another – only then is it possible to form a cohesive and strong unit that cannot be divided... perhaps one that can stand up to the types of reform that push the most vulnerable into evermore difficult living circumstances; one that truly understands that whatever we do or say to the least of our brothers and sisters - whether they live on our doorstep or in a country we barely know - we do to Jesus Christ Himself.

William Temple didn't mince his words when he spoke to politicians and Prime Ministers, and neither was his faith woolly in the sense that he was very clear that there are responsibilities on every side: for those that can, to lend a hand and ensure that we vote, work together and plan for the good of all, for it is only the good of all that will eventually benefit ourselves and as human beings, that is likely to be the most persuasive argument of all – it will benefit us to do the right thing; and secondly, that we each have a part to play in ensuring that society is a good and Godly place in which to bring up our children, care for our parents and grandparents, and love our neighbours, but it means being big enough to recognise and accept that everyone in the market place will receive the same reward, it means giving up our desire to be first or have the most, just as much as we hope that others will, for us.

William Temple reminds us that our faith has the ability to influence and inspire people not just in their own lifetime, but in generations to come including politicians and Prime Ministers. But I wonder what it would take for each of us in our families, neighbourhoods, faith communities, nation or even our world, to be able to stand before God and shout 'last man in'.