

Sermon for Remembrance Sunday  
**“Seeing is believing”**

*Jn 6 v 40 “Yes, it is the Father’s will that all who see the Son and believe in Him shall have eternal life and I shall raise him up on the last day”*

I have found it more helpful, as years have gone by, to read John’s Gospel as a wise old man’s reflections on the eternal meaning of Jesus life: Jesus his closest friend and hero. Please bear with me if we look at Jn 6.40 in that way: I think we can find meaning and hope on this Remembrance Sunday that eludes many.

Our best storytellers today- the JK Rowling’ and Ian Rankin, help us to escape from the sometimes grim realities of life. But at this season, we continue to be surprised by new stories of heroism from the fields of battle. We are surprised because the central characters never told their own stories: realities were too grim, too frightening, too empty of love and meaning to bear re-telling.

What kind of hero was Jesus?

Was he one who extolled his own virtues amidst the grimmest of realities?

Or was he one who left others to discover his towering achievement, one redolent with meaning?

It is in the latter spirit that I can make sense of our G & Jn 6.40

It is often said that ‘Seeing is believing’  
of remarkable places, people, achievements.

Unless we have been there, ‘got the T-shirt’, seen with our own eyes, their beauty, charisma and scale, they seem beyond comprehension.

Neither John (nor Jesus- if they are His words) can be using ‘seeing’ in the sense that we ‘see’: it is too restrictive.

There is something here for all.

Neither Jn (nor J- if they are His words) can be using ‘believe’ in the sense of that the church, centuries later, encouraged its adherents to believe: there no creeds.

This is seeing in the sense of the penny dropping: “Aaaaaaaaahhhh!

*All who understand, absorb and model their lives on Jesus will live forever.*

'Who could ask for anything more'?

What could be more meaningful: more redolent with meaning

*What could be more difficult to achieve: there's the rub!*

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Richard Holloway's latest book is entitled 'The stories we tell ourselves' and mischievously subtitled "--to give meaning to a meaningless world"

Richard cannot seem to see beyond the atrocities that humans have committed against each other- particularly against innocent children. Auschwitz looms large in his mind.

How could a loving, compassionate creator allow such things?

But if all humankind saw (as in 'Aaaaaahhh') and believed in Jesus -understood Him, absorbed Him and lived as He lived, history would be an atrocity- and genocide-free zone: today's children would be in an infinitely better place.

We would be living in what another Richard (Rohr, from the Centre for Contemplation calls a '**Christ -soaked universe**'.

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But the only way to a completely permeated by Jesus requires its human inhabitants-you & I, to become Christ- soaked:  
And we know how far we are from such a state!

To use familiar images from our current war against the Covid virus:  
most of the time we are on mute;

most of the time our feelings for Jesus are masked;

much of the time we are content to self-isolate.

Only on odd occasions do we sanitise the hands meant to love without ceasing.

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Those that laid down their lives for others in two world wars, in a flash, were soaked in Christ, one with him:

*prepared to die that others may live in peace:*

*the sacrifice of our local hero's, recorded on our war memorial, all bear the marks of eternity: they inspiring today's grandchildren and great grandchildren to live for others: they live forever.*

No matter the untruths they were told to get them to the battlefield –  
--- ['it will all be over by Christmas' - yes, we had heard that one  
before!]

No matter how ill-equipped they were, how ill-advised and ill-  
ordered they were for battle -----[and that one!]  
---in being prepared to risk their lives, from under-aged villager to  
Oxbridge graduate, all were doing the Father's will.

And we can do that anytime of the day or night:  
agents of universal permeation  
part of a Christ-soaked universe.

Neither age nor adversary, mendacity nor mobility is a barrier.  
In recent weeks/months, we have seen a virus, product of our  
waywardness, subordinated by:  
a paraplegic child,  
a centenarian  
an ex- music teacher constrained by dementia  
and an army (small A), prepared to lay down their lives to save the  
lives of others, every working day.

All who understand, absorb and model their lives on Jesus will live  
forever, whether or not they can recite a creed.

Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, theologian, author, speaker, has  
summed up her life experience thus:

“In all my years of traveling around the world, one thing has been  
present in every region, everywhere. One thing has stood out and  
convinced me of the certain triumph of the great human gamble on  
equality and justice.

Everywhere there are people who, despite finding themselves mired in  
periods of national disruption or personal marginalization, refuse to give  
up the thought of a better future or give in to the allurements of a  
deteriorating present.

They never lose hope that the values they learned in the best of times  
or the courage it takes to reclaim their world from the worst of times are  
worth the commitment of their lives. These people, the best of ourselves,  
are legion and they are everywhere. They live forever!

A prayer from the Centre for Contemplation

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer this prayer in all the holy names of God, amen.*