



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Sunday, 13 November 2022 – Remembrance Sunday**  
**Readings: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 & St Luke 21; 5-19**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

**When farce becomes reality**

I only started watching the TV sitcom 'Blackadder' in its last series, which depicted the central disparate characters in the trenches of WW1. Though always jockeying for position, the common bond was the will to survive. If, like me, you saw the final programme, you may recall that at the very end, the farce turned to factual accuracy and, by so doing, made its point all the more poignantly. The characters were lined up shoulder-to-shoulder in the trenches, as an eery silence descended on them. The senior officers blustered trying to convince themselves that peace has been declared. Blackadder, by contrast, recognised the reality of the situation: it was the silence before whistles would be blown along the ranks signalling the move to go over the top. Notwithstanding the awful reality of their situation, Blackadder blew his whistle and, with courage, they launched themselves over. The final scenes of human activity charging through the flash of gun fire faded, until a tranquil field of crimson poppies was revealed, emblematic of the soldiers shed blood and lives lost. No words were needed: the scene depicted eloquently the destructiveness of war.

**How do we keep calm and carry on?**

Few of us present this morning will have been in active combat. We will, however, have seen on TV, conflicts in many parts of the world, Ukraine to name but one example. We will have been appalled and yet, partially protected from the awfulness of the reality of the situation for the people on the ground. Perhaps, we can best understand Remembrance Day by reflecting on the pain of loss in our own lives, of loved ones who gave so much to us in life but who have died and gone before. How, do we acquire that phlegmatic spirit of Baldrick to keep calm and carry on, whilst having the realism of Blackadder that life must be lived despite all? Though we may never pay the ultimate sacrifice, as have others, how do we seek to counter the destructive effects of loss by making life fruitful both for ourselves and future generations?

**Do not be afraid of what is to come**

We need to dig into the bible readings shared earlier, and focus on the overriding message conveyed and not be overwhelmed by the detail of the illustrations used to amplify the message. Right in the centre of the gospel Jesus says this, "Do not be afraid." "Do not be afraid." This is God's constant message of assurance running throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelations. The best known accounts will perhaps be those of the carol services of the God-sent message that the angel Gabriel delivered to Mary saying, 'Do not be afraid

Mary, for you have found favour with God and man.’ Similarly, when angels appeared to the shepherds in the fields above Bethlehem, ‘Do not be afraid for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ And, throughout his ministry, Jesus stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his disciples sharing those reassuring words to support and encourage them.

### **Digging deep for victory!**

Importantly, the purpose of telling us not to be afraid is not a comforting whitewash from the reality of living here on earth. God gave the stewardship of his creation to us and, as we are but human: life in all its inequalities will happen including, as Jesus states wars, famines, plagues and, all sorts of false influencers claiming to be God. We are not to follow them but Christ alone, who is the only truth and, in him, we need not be afraid of what we face for he has shared our experiences, even death and, triumphed. St Paul echoes and expands on this theme of keeping calm and carrying on by encouraging the early Christians in Thessalonica to ignore the noise of false influencers but instead work quietly and diligently following the example of Jesus, building hope for their eternal future. For us, the choice is similar, for we know that eventually, our lives will end. Do we trust God or place our faith in the spin of political power, military might or, the lure of wealth? I’ll answer that by giving a St Andrew’s analogy. My cousin Canon Victor Collas said, at the time that he was Rector of this Parish, ‘When times are hard, you’ve just got to put more in.’ Life is worth working at towards our eternal goal; however, it is only achievable by working shoulder-to-shoulder with our faith so that we may discern God’s truth, to steady our footsteps following Christ’s way through life. Then, as he promises, ‘By your endurance you will gain your souls.’

Endurance: by God’s grace, the rewards are eternal, so, let’s continue to put more in, now. Amen.