

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008

## Remembrance Sunday

### Ecclesiastes 3: 1 - 8



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Ecclesiastes is often attributed to King Solomon, writing in old age as he looks back over his life. The author takes stock of the world as he has experienced it between the horizons of birth and death. It contains the reflections of an old man, most of whose life was meaningless because he had not relied on God.

Ch.1:2 reads: "*Meaningless! Meaningless! says the Teacher*". Have you ever been to a war grave cemetery and felt the enormity of the sacrifices made? It's hard to imagine men killing each other in war. But they fought and died because they believed that it was their duty. In the aftermath of war the tragedy of the human stories that are told can make us echo the opening words of the book of Ecclesiastes. But what is important to remember is that the sacrifice made by so many means that we live and worship in freedom and that their sacrifice was not meaningless.

Remembrance is a time to not only look back and reflect but also to look to a horizon beyond ourselves. Eugene Peterson in his introduction to Ecclesiastes writes "*it is a John the Baptist kind of book; it is cleansing. It is repentance. It is purging. We read Ecclesiastes to get scrubbed clean It is an expose and rejection of every arrogant expectation that we can live our lives by ourselves on our own terms.*"

Read Ch.3:1 One of the key issues that Eugene Peterson highlights in his introduction is that of cleansing, prayer and repentance. This is the season we are now in. Disaster and calamity often cause people to repent and pray. In May 1940, the political and military situation in Europe was catastrophic. A national day of prayer was held. The nation gathered to pray. It was one of the most dramatic turning points of the war. God was listening when thousands of believers were praying for divine intervention. The outcome of the war hinged at one critical moment on a National Day of Prayer. The prayers of God's people are never meaningless. One of the greatest lies of Satan is that prayer is not effective. We must never believe it!

We too are being called to a season of cleansing, prayer and repentance. Read Ch.12:v13,14 There is a view sometimes held that we can do as we like and that it will never be discovered or disclosed. Read the rhetorical question in Ps 73: 11. The answer is that He does know and he does have knowledge because he sees deep within each one of us and nothing is hid from his eyes. Read Ps. 139 v11 & 12. In recent weeks we have been seeking God together for his vision and purpose for us at St Pauls. During the PCC away day we were given three pictures one of which was of a river flowing but impeded by a dam of twigs and branches. The Church also met to pray and during that time of prayer we named some of those twigs and branches. Those hidden things whether good or evil. But there is a further corollary and that is that before he will take us forward into the vision he has for us - the promised land - unless we deal with that which we currently believe is hidden then in his timing he *will bring every deed into judgement including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil.*

That same evening, God in his mercy revealed that he had provided an *open door for us*, that he loves and cares for us. The words given were "*Little flock surrender and consecrate yourselves and I will flow through you.*" We cannot live as children of the light if we pretend that there is no sin to deal with and we cannot move into all that God has for us; unless we deal with what some believe is hidden and that no one will discover. Read 1 John 1:v5-10. God in his mercy has promised both liberty and freedom to walk in the light if we deal with those things that hinder us. We are being called to remember the supreme sacrifice of all time: *Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup>He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*



Witness: questions to discuss

*At the next meeting of Small Group Leaders on Nov 10th there will be further opportunity for group leaders to share together and pray into all God is saying to us as a Church Family.*

1. Spend some time praying for those who are fighting on our behalf. Pray especially for their families. Remember those who you may know who have been lost to either war or disease, and give thanks for them.
2. Have you ever been to a war grave cemetery and felt its enormity? Did you think that the sacrifice was meaningless?
3. Spend some time in worship and prayer considering Ch.3:1 and pray for the season that we are in as a church. Share any pictures or words that you may receive.
4. Read Ch. 12: v14 and the other references given in the Psalms and 1 John. Again prayerfully consider the picture of a river flowing but impeded by twigs and branches.