

Last week was the 82nd anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy. The whole event honoured and celebrated the cost and sacrifice of those who landed on those beaches to defeat tyranny. Sadly, with the passing of so much time, so few are now left to tell story of why they died and one of the astonishing moments of that weekend was when a French village booed Pete Hegseth, the American Secretary for Defence. They did so because instead of speaking about the 4414 Allied soldiers who died that day, he spoke about immigrants in a way which echoed the very tyrant these men gave their lives to defeat. This year we approximately celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the defeat of another tyranny, that of sin, death and the devil by one man who died on a cross and was raised from the dead. We celebrate the incalculable riches and the rainbow-like wisdom which have been lavished on us so that we may go and tell it on mountain that ‘In Jesus, there ain’t no road like it.’

I don’t know if you’ve noticed how odd the Ephesians 3 titles are. This is because all of them include song lyrics from songs I like and today’s is from the song ‘Long Shore Drive’; or LSD for short. The song is not about the drug, but the pleasure people had from driving up and down Long Shore Drive, the road which runs from downtown Chicago to the suburbs, and enjoying all of its sights and sounds. Not all that long ago people would go out for a drive for the sheer fun of it though it does sound very passé today, doesn’t it? Today we’re more likely to speak about going on a favourite walk when you can immerse yourself in its sights and sounds of the countryside. I love my long way round walk to church because it gives me the opportunity to ponder and this is what Paul wants us to do. He wants us to ponder all that Jesus has accomplished for us, as he says in verse 11, where he tells us to simply stop, to look and to listen and this is not only good road safety advice it is also good Christian sense to pause and to smell the roses, as it were.

We are to ponder verse 12 where Paul tells us to be bold and confident in coming to Jesus because of all that he has done for us. This is exactly what Hebrews 4 verse 14 is saying and the truth is, is that we can stand before Jesus without any sense of fear, shame, guilt, condemnation or anxiety. Paul says to us – **Jesus welcomes you.** Jesus gets off his throne to kiss you, to dress you, to put a ring on your finger, shoes on feet, to wash your feet, to put his hand on your shoulder and to embrace you. He wants to remind you, that you are loved because we are a Child of God, we are part of the People of God, we are a Priest of God, we are part of the Army of God, we are the Temple of God, we are a Friend of God, we are in the Family of God and so on and so on.

One of the consequences of being loved by Jesus, is that we are able to live for Jesus. If you are not sure about him, about what he has done for you, of his love for you, his gift of the Spirit to you, then you will certainly not live confidently for him. But Paul says in verse 12 that we can have boldness and confidence in coming before him and so we can live boldly, or if you like, we can boldly go in loving service. This is what I do when I minister in school, in this community, in making someone cry, on purpose mind you, because I am confident that Jesus is with me. If this is true for me, then it

is also true for each and every one of us whether we are at work, at rest or at play and we remind ourselves of this when we make our vow at our annual church rededication service. The words we say are:

Almighty God,

I am no longer my own but Yours. Your will not mine be done in all things, wherever You may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things and when I have nothing, I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. May it be so for ever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven.... Amen.

Do you know why Tuesday, the 9th June was so special to me? It was the 35th anniversary of my ordination. Like D-Day it was a day when I reflected on and reminded myself of my ordination and the text given to me. The text is John 21 verses 15 – 19 where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him and I ask myself using Jesus' words, 'Andrew, son of Tom, Do you love me?' Like Peter I want to say, 'Lord you know I love you' and like Peter my shadow shouts at me because of my faults and failings, my griefs and sorrows that my love for him is imperfect. This is why verse 13 matters. You see my griefs and sorrows, not my faults and failings, are your glory. Verse 13 says that we can all have hope and we can all live boldly for Jesus because Paul, and myself, are encouragements for you to do so too. The 6th June, D-Day, did not end the war, but it was the start of the end which came 11 months later. The cross and resurrection are not the end of sin, death or the devil but they are the start of the end and we're to live boldly and confidently because they declare that one day victory will come. May each of us dare to live in such a way to the praise of Jesus.