

2CH Sunday at 7.30

Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

Journey of discovery

Presented by Harry Goodhew

INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO SHARE A FEW MOMENTS WITH YOU THIS MORNING

MY NAME IS HARRY GOODHEW

ABOUT 3 YEARS AGO MY WIFE AND I, ALONG WITH ONE OF OUR DAUGHTERS, TOOK A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY TO THE WILD AND WIND SWEEPED ISLANDS OF THE OUTER HEBRIDES

THESE ISLANDS, OFF THE NORTH WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND, HAVE A LONG AND FAMOUS HISTORY. REMAINS INDICATE THAT VIKING RAIDERS LANDED THERE LONG AGO.

BUT IT WAS NOT ANCIENT HISTORY THAT DREW US THERE. IT WAS SOMETHING MUCH MORE RECENT.

MY MOTHER SPENT HER CHILDHOOD ON THE ISLE OF LEWIS THE MOST NORTHERLY OF THE GROUP. SHE DIED A WEEK OR SO SHORT OF HER 99TH BIRTHDAY AND WE DECIDED TO RETURN HER ASHES TO THE ISLANDS.

IT WAS INDEED A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY, BUT IT WAS ALSO ONE OF DISCOVERY, AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU WHAT WE LEARNED.

MUSIC

SEGMENT 1

I SAID THAT OUR TRIP TO THE HEBRIDES WAS A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY AND ONE OF DISCOVERY. WELL, IT REALLY WAS BOTH.

MY MOTHER LIVED HERE IN AUSTRALIA FOR MORE THAN 70 OF HER NEARLY 99 YEARS. SHE LOVED THIS COUNTY BUT FOR ALL THAT; SHE NEVER CEASED BEING A SCOT. SCOTLAND WAS IN HER BLOOD

INDEED, I GREW UP WITH TALES OF THE NORTH AND OF HER CHILDHOOD: WITH STORIES OF SNOW AND ICE, OF WILD SEAS AND OF BRAVE AND HARDY FISHERMEN.

YET, FOR ALL THAT, WE WERE ALWAYS INTRIGUED BY HER DESIRE TO HAVE HER ASHES CAST ON RUNNING WATER. RUNNING WATER HAD NOT BEEN A FEATURE OF HER LIFE IN AUSTRALIA AND DID NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND THE REASON FOR HER REQUEST.

LEWIS TAUGHT US THE REASON: ON LEWIS, WATER RUNS.

CONSTANT RAIN ENSURES THAT EVERY TINY CREEK OR BURN, AND EVERY STREAM AND RIVER, RUNS CONTINUALLY.

SHE WANTED HER ASHES CARRIED ON THESE RUNNING WATERS OUT TO THE RESTLESS AND TURBULENT OCEAN THAT RINGS THESE BLEAK BUT BEAUTIFUL ISLANDS JUST AS A DARK BACKGROUND ENHANCES THE BEAUTY OF THE JEWELS THAT NESTLE IN ITS FOLDS.

SO FINALLY, HER ASHES WERE CARRIED ON THE RUNNING WATERS OF SCOTLAND TO THE BOSOM OF THE GREAT OCEAN THERE TO AWAIT THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

HOWEVER, THERE WAS A SECOND LESSON TO BE LEARNED. I DISCOVERED IT IN A PRAYER INSPIRED BY THE LOCATION OF THE HEBRIDES AND THE SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS THEY HAVE GENERATED.

LET ME READ YOU THE PRAYER:

THOUGH THE DAWN BREAKS CHEERLESS ON THIS ISLE TODAY,
MY SPIRIT WALKS UPON A PATH OF LIGHT.

FOR I KNOW MY GREATNESS.

THOU HAST BUILT ME A THRONE WITHIN THY HEART

I DWELL SAFELY WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF THY CARE.

I CANNOT FOR A MOMENT FALL OUT OF THE EVERLASTING ARMS.

I AM ON MY WAY TO THY GLORY

WHEN I RETURN IN A MOMENT OR TWO I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU WHAT THIS PRAYER SAYS TO ME, WHICH MIGHT ALSO BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO YOU AS WELL.

MUSIC

SEGMENT 2

THAT HEBREDIAN PRAYER SPEAKS TO ME OF AT LEAST THREE THINGS
FIRST, IT REMINDS ME THAT OUTWARD GREY AND CHEERLESS DAYS -
AND SUCH DAYS DO COME, AND MOST OF US HAVE SOME
EXPEERIENCE OF THEM - DO NOT, OR NEED NOT, DETERMINE THE TRUE
INWARD STATE OF MY SPIRIT

WHEN OUR EYES ARE FIXED ON OUR HEAVENLY FATHER WE CAN SAY,
REGARDLESS OF DIFFICULT OR UNPLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCES: “THIS
IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE, WE WILL REJOICE AND BE
GLAD IN IT”. IT MAY CONTINUE TO BE A GREY DAY AND CHEERLESS
BUT OUR SPIRIT WILL WALK ON A PATH OF LIGHT.

FURTHER, TO THINK THAT GOD HAS BUILT FOR ME, A THRONE IN HIS
OWN HEART, IS TO KNOW THAT I AM LOVED, HONOURED, AND
CHERISHED BY HIM, AS THE RESULT OF HIS OWN GRACE UNDESERVED
AND UNMERITED BY ME. THIS IS AN ACT OF PURE LOVE AND MERCY,
AN ACT OF DIVINE COMPASSION

THE LIFE, DEATH, RESURRECTION AND THE PRESENT RULE OF JESUS
ENSURES, FOR EVERY PERSON WHO THROWS HIS OR HER SELF ON
GOD’S SAVING MERCY, THAT GOD ESTABLISHES THEIR OWN SPECIAL
PLACE IN HIS HEART AND IN HIS PURPOSES – ITS THE PLACE FOR A
ROYAL DAUGHTER OR SON

FINALLY, DWELLING IN THE CIRCLE OF HIS CARE, THERE IS A SAFETY
THAT IS MEANT TO GENERATE HUMBLE CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF
THE BLEAKEST DAYS AND THE MOST VIOLENT STORMS. IN THAT
CIRCLE THERE ARE ALWAYS PRESENT THE “EVERLASTING ARMS”, AND

THE ASSURANCE THAT, IN CHRIST, GOD'S CHILDREN ARE ON THEIR WAY TO GOD'S GLORY.

WE ARE TO MATCH A CHEERLESS DAWN WITH A FINAL GLORY

THAT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE EASY TO DO BUT AFTER THIS MUSIC I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU A TINY BUT TRULY AMAZING PIECE OF HISTORY

MUSIC

SEGMENT 3

HOW "GREY AND CHEERLESS" DO YOU THINK A DAY HAS TO BE BEFORE WE CAN OR SHOULD NO LONGER REJOICE IN GOD?

IN A RECENT MAGAZINE ARTICLE, THE ENGLISH WRITER, MICHELE GUINNESS NOTED THAT "THERE WERE JEWS WHO DANCED IN AUSCHWITZ ON THE FEAST OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMAND TO REJOICE"

HOW REMARKABLE WAS THAT?

GOD CALLS ON HIS PEOPLE TO REJOICE AND TO TAKE HEART IN HIS LOVE AND GOODNESS EVEN WHEN OUTWARDLY CIRCUMSTANCES LOOK BLEAK. THAT IS THE THEME OF THE HEBRIDEAN PRAYER AND IT FOCUSES ON THE GOOD GROUNDS THAT GOD PROVIDES FOR REJOICING

GOD'S CALL TO REJOICE IS NOT A CALL TO BE STUPID: TO CALL BLACK WHITE OR EXCRUCIATING PAIN ANYTHING OTHER THAN EXCRUCIATING. IT IS A CALL TO SEE GOD AND TO KNOW HIS HEART AND HIS GOODNESS EVEN IN THE FACE OF THE WORST TRAGEDIES.

JOB WAS NOT ABLE TO FLASH A CONTENTED SMILE IN THE FACE OF HIS TRAGEDIES AND OF HIS FEAR THAT GOD HAD TURNED AGAINST HIM AND FORGOTTEN TO BE JUST, BUT HE COULD SAY: "EVEN THOUGH HE SLAY ME I WILL I HOPE IN HIM"

REJOICING IN GOD WHEN LIFE IS SUNNY IS NO GREAT CHALLENGE. TO DO SO "WHEN THE DAWN BREAKS CHEERLESS" IS SOMETHING ELSE.

WHEN WOULD YOU THINK GOD MIGHT SEE FAITH AS BEING STRONGEST – IN THE SUNSHINE OR IN THE RAIN?

THAT WE DWELL SAFELY WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF HIS CARE - THAT WE CANNOT FALL OUT OF THE EVERLASTING ARMS – THAT IN JESUS, WE ARE ON OUR WAY TO HIS GLORY – THEY ARE SOLID REASONS FOR REJOICING

MUSIC

CLOSER

SO FRIENDS, THE HEBRIDEAN PRAYER AGAIN:

THOUGH THE DAWN BREAKS CHEERLESS ON THIS ISLE TODAY,
MY SPIRIT WALKS UPON A PATH OF LIGHT.
FOR I KNOW MY GREATNESS.

THOU HAST BUILT ME A THRONE WITHIN THY HEART
I DWELL SAFELY WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF THY CARE.
I CANNOT FOR A MOMENT FALL OUT OF THE EVERLASTING ARMS.
I AM ON MY WAY TO THY GLORY

GOD BLESS YOU, AND THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.