

**“Jesus, S for Sugar and Remembrance Sunday...”**

**11/11/18**

**I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Amen.**

“Hello skipper.”

“Hello navigator.”

“Half a minute to go.”

“Ok.”

“Hello Engineer, Skipper here.”

“Yeah?”

“Will you put the revs up please?”

“Yeah.”

“Ok, keep weaving.”

“A lot of first night and fighter flares, Skipper.”

“Ok, boys. Ok.”

“Bomb doors open.”

“Hello Bombardier?”

“Ok, when you are.”

“Bomb doors open.”

“Bomb doors open, Bombardier.”

“Right.”

“Steady.”

“Steady.”

“Bombs going in a minute.”

“Tracer behind us...” (Sound of gunfire)

“Where is he Rear Gunner? Can you see him?”

“Did you shoot him down?”

“Keep weaving, there is some flak coming up.”

“Don’t shout all at once!”

“Hello Mid-Gunner. Did you recognise the aircraft going down?”

“No, I didn’t recognise it but it is definitely going down now.”

“Good, Jimmy, I can see it, Boy.”

“Good show.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ag6Q5zy7GJE>

What you have just heard is actual radio conversation between crew members on board an Avro Lancaster on a bombing run during World War 2.

I have transcribed the words to the best of my ability from the actual recording which can be found on YouTube. (I will post the actual link on my sermon for you to listen to)

In front of you this morning is a photograph of an Avro Lancaster in full flight.



The Avro Lancaster is a British four-engined Second World War heavy bomber. It was designed by Roy Chadwick and powered by four Rolls-Royce Merlins. (The same engine that powered the all-famous Battle of Britain Spitfire)

Although the Lancaster was primarily a night bomber, it excelled in many other roles, including day light precision bombing, as well as the legendary Dam Buster Bomb load that destroyed a number of German dam walls.

Some of you may indeed be wondering why the focus on one veteran war aircraft?

Today is Remembrance Sunday. It is the one Sunday in the year when we pay both homage and respect to all those souls who gave their lives in war for the peace that we all enjoy today.

My intention was to try and present the war in a more personal manner. I chose the Avro Lancaster.

Why you may ask?

Ever since I was a child, one of my long term goals has been to complete my Private Pilot's licence. (I would have done this a long time ago if it was not for lack of funds)

Furthermore, I have always held a deep respect and admiration for those pilots who made a difference during the war. In 2003 I had the opportunity to visit Hendon, an air force museum outside London. Here, in all its glory and splendour, sits one of the few remaining Lancasters that survived the war. Her war is over now, but she is a powerful reminder of all those who gave up their lives for a just cause.

When I first stood in front of the Lancaster in Hendon, I was dumbstruck by the power and beauty that such a machine could represent. I stalled and engaged with the atmosphere that this aircraft created.

When I returned to South Africa, my mind often slipped back to that moment in the hanger with that Lancaster. I knew that I had to go back and engage with that moment again. There was something there. Unfinished business.

My opportunity came in 2006 when I returned to London. I immediately made plans to visit Hendon again. My sister still asked me if I had perhaps considered whether or not I had a past life and had maybe served on her.

This time, as I entered the hanger where the Lancaster was parked, I found myself alone with her. Once again I was mesmerised by both her beauty and power, for ultimately she was built as an instrument of death. I looked quickly around and saw that there was no one present in the hanger. I quickly crossed the barrier tape, walked up to one of the steel propellers and kissed it.

I connected.

All at once, I realised that this surreal moment was not so much about the incredible technology in front of me, but rather an acknowledgement of all the men who served on her, as well as all of the men who died on aircraft just like her. My kiss was a sign from my heart of peace and thanks, a symbol or acknowledgement of the lives that were given so that I might have the freedom to be here with you today.

I have never forgotten that moment.

It was life-changing.

I will go back to S for Sugar again one day before I die and pay my respects again.



Bomber Command aircrews suffered a high casualty rate: of a total of 125000 aircrew, 57205 were killed (a 46% death rate), a further 8402 were wounded in action and 9838 became prisoners of war. Therefore, a total of 75446 airmen (60% of operational airmen were killed, wounded or taken prisoner)

Our role as Christians today is two-fold:

Firstly, we are called to acknowledge and remember those who have given their lives for us. This is exactly what we are doing this morning and I thank you for your presence here today.

Secondly, it remains both our duty and privilege to continue making a difference in the free world that has been left to us. People, good people, people like you and I, gave up their lives so that we might be free. What do we do with that freedom as Christians? We make a difference. We continue to spread the Gospel, take the light of Jesus into the darkness, spread hope and joy to those less privileged than us, we continue to build the Church of Christ and most of all, we continue to ensure that future generations remain aware of the sacrifices that many of our ancestors made.

The future of the world lies in our hands, for we are the Body of Christ. We are His hands and we are His collective mind. We have a say in how the future pans out. We have a say in how our societies are governed, led and educated. This is a great responsibility that cannot be taken lightly if we are to honour the legacy that Jesus left us and the good fight that cost the lives of so many people during the Great Wars. Ultimately, no-one wins in a war scenario. Everyone loses. Everyone. It is our responsibility to ensure, to the best of our ability, that this never happens again.

Today is also Thanksgiving Sunday for us here at St Pauls. I cannot think of a more lovely way to acknowledge those who gave their lives for us than making a financial commitment to our parish and all that we stand and live for, in Jesus.

I am reminded of the beautiful poem written by Robert Laurence Binyon titled "For the Fallen".

***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.***

I am also reminded of the beautiful words from Taps that I learnt as an Air Scout:

*Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky;  
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.*

*Fading light, dims the sight,  
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright.  
From afar, drawing nigh, falls the night.*

*Thanks and praise, for our days,  
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, neath the sky;  
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.*

*Sun has set, shadows come,  
Time has fled, Scouts must go to their beds  
Always true to the promise that they made.*

*While the light fades from sight,  
And the stars gleaming rays softly send,  
To thy hands we our souls, Lord, commend.*

I for one will be lighting a candle this morning for all those souls who died for you and I. I encourage you to do the same.

May God bless you in this week ahead as you remember those who gave their lives for our freedom.

Amen.