

Dr Ian Baker Wall AM. 11.11.22

We have just heard the reading from Ecclesiastes and that passage includes a long list of 'a time to's'. 'A time to be born and a time to die' and so on. I am very conscious that the list includes 'a time to mourn and a time to dance' and today we do mourn the death of Ian Wall and we pray for Pammie and Annabel as they especially mourn Ian's loss.

As we mourn Ian I want to add two more 'a time to's' to the list in Ecclesiastes chapter 3.

Today is 'a time to' give thanks for the life of Ian Wall. We have heard in the eulogies just how much there is to give thanks for in Ian's life. So that's the first 'a time to'. A time to give thanks to God for God's gift of Dr Ian Baker Wall AM.

The second 'a time to' I'd like to add is, 'a time to celebrate'. Not so much to celebrate Ian's life over the past 91 years but to celebrate his future.

Ian was a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and the centre of Christianity is Jesus - his life, death and resurrection.

Christians believe that Jesus' death on a cross is not only an example of great love and self-sacrifice, but also brings reconciliation, peace, relationship with God.

The death of Jesus is incredibly important, and is central to the Christian faith, which is why Christians often wear crosses, have them on the wall in their homes and some churches are built in the shape of a cross.

But the cross wasn't the end of the story. Also central to the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus. A few days after Jesus was dead and buried his friends saw him alive. Different, he was different, and some had trouble recognising him at first, but it was Jesus, and he was alive. Not resuscitated but resurrected. In the end more than 500 people saw Jesus alive after his resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection is central to the Christian faith because we understand that Jesus was the first to come through death, to defeat death. In Jesus death didn't have the final say. This had an implication for Jesus, but not for him only. Jesus has broken the hold of death and we who are connected to him by baptism and faith will share in his resurrection.

That's why today is a time to celebrate. It is a time to celebrate that death is not the end for Ian. Death is not some cruel, 'got you in the end' joke after a wonderful, productive and generous life. Death is not the end for Ian.

Resurrection, life, peace, wholeness and joy are what awaits Ian. Not because Ian was perfect - he wasn't. Not because he was clever and smart - though he was. Not because he was with Pammie, incredibly generous, though he certainly was that including to this cathedral.

Life peace and wholeness awaits Ian not because of his goodness, but because of the death and resurrection of Jesus and Ian's embracing of that death and resurrection. Not perfectly. I am sure Ian had questions and doubts like all of us, but he trusted God. He trusted God's love. Ian trusted and accepted Jesus' death and resurrection and tried to follow Jesus as he lived his long life.

And so, we can give thanks for Ian's life and celebrate his future.

This good news of resurrection will be echoed in a few minutes when we hear sung for us "I know that my redeemer liveth" from Handel's *Messiah*. The famous oratorio written for Easter.

The good news of resurrection will also be reflected in the committal prayer towards the end of the service, a prayer which begins, 'Almighty God, our heavenly father, you have given us a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life'. A sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Absolutely, and that is for Ian.

But not just Ian. This sure and certain hope of resurrection, of life, is for everyone.

Earlier in the service we heard the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. That Psalm speaks so clearly about God's love. 'The Lord is my shepherd: therefore, can I lack nothing'. 'Surely your goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'.

We have probably heard these words before many times. And they are true. Billions of people around the world experience them to be true.

God does love us. God is with us. God wants life and flourishing for us all. No matter who we are or what we have done or what we do. God's love for us depends on God and God's character not us. We can't earn God's love. We don't deserve God's love. God loves us and wants the best for us because that's what God is like.

The greatest expression of God's love is Jesus. Jesus is God's word to the world. In Jesus we can see what God is like. Through Jesus' death on the cross we can be at peace with God now and forever. Because of Jesus' resurrection we too can share resurrection life. Death is not the end.

And that's for us all of us.

Today is 'a time to' give thanks for Ian's life.

Today is 'a time to' celebrate and anticipate Ian's resurrection to eternal life.

For all of us today can be 'a time to' embrace or embrace again what God has done for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

That we with Ian may know in our lives the 'sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life'.

Amen.