

A sermon by Canon Maggie Guite

Remembrance Sunday 2010 (2 before Advent)

Malachi 4.1-2a      Luke 21.5-19

## Remembering

It's often been said that 'truth is the first casualty of war'. The word for truth in Greek – the language of the New Testament – means 'not forgetting'. It could be said that in remembering today, we're hoping to heal some of the effects of war – trying to hold all the wounds up to God, all the human forgetting - of truth, of humanity, of love and of justice – which contribute to war.

We're remembering that God was and is there, in the midst of all the horrors and cruelties of warfare; that his love and his justice remain beacons for humanity despite everything which threatens to disillusion us; and we're remembering that everyone who seeks God's love and justice, even where conflict reigns – everyone who endures to the end in this vision – ultimately has nothing to

fear. *'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God'*, as the Book of Wisdom puts it. *'For you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings'*, in the words of the prophet Malachi.

But we're also here to remember, in a very particular way, men and women: not just 'big ideas' and serried ranks of people, but flesh and blood individuals, whose lives have been cut short in time of war. We're here to remember them before God, with poignancy, but also with trust and thanksgiving.

Because many of us may not have personal memories of those who have died, I should like to conclude what I'm saying today by sharing with you a poem, which I think brings a young man vividly to life in the mind's eye.. His name was Len Trigger, and he came from Ruthin in North Wales: I heard this poem read by his half-brother when our family was on holiday in Ruthin this summer, and Malcolm and I attended a service in the parish church which turned out to be a civic celebration of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II.

Len died aged 24 on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, at Kohima in North East India, leading a platoon against a Japanese machine gun post. He was serving with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

His brother, with whom I corresponded after hearing the poem, says that he never saw him, yet he feels he does know him both through the recollections of others, and especially through his poems. He says of him, 'He loved the decencies of life – good company, beautiful women, but perhaps above all, Ruthin. He possessed a strong streak of fairness and a romanticism that was not destroyed even by the horrors he must have experienced.'

I feel too, that in this poem (which was inspired by one of Rupert Brooke's – there's a our local connection, if you like!) a young man from the 1940s does speak to us of what life meant to him – and in the very last line, of his hope beyond this life.

The poem is called: *Another Lover – After Reading Rupert Brooke*