

Sermon for 10 5 20, Easter 5, Yr A,
St Peter's Limpsfield live-stream Eucharist
Acts 7:55-end; John 14:1-14

Stephen, Grandad and enough

An interesting question comes up from this morning's stories about what satisfies us. What is enough? Doesn't it seem strange and topsy-turvy that, though Jesus has reassured the disciples - *Do not let your hearts be troubled* - Thomas is asking more questions, and Philip is telling Jesus that he wants more proof; on the other hand, Stephen, who is about to become the first Christian martyr, is full of vision and glory, forgiveness and grace - even while he is being stoned to death.

As we remembered VE Day, my mum sent around our family WhatsApp group a down to earth and radiant picture of my grandad in the army on the continent in 1944, having a tea break with four of his mates. Mum shared this wonderful photo with the greeting: *'He would raise a cup to you all.'* Not long afterwards, he received an injury which very nearly killed him.

Her Majesty the Queen, in her address, noted our present *'absence of togetherness but significant unity'* in the lockdown, in our love and care for each other. A bit like in war, there are stories of great heroism and quiet self-giving. As for Stephen; as for my grandad; they seem to be satisfied because they have enough. The doubts and the questions and the straining to see more all have their place, for sure; but at that moment, a cup of tea shared with brothers in arms is enough; at that moment, even facing a brutal death, Stephen's faith and hope and love is enough.

I'm told that my grandad couldn't believe in God because his favourite padre was killed in the war. But I hope there's something here for him and for all of us with our very reasonable doubts and questions. Perhaps the God in Christ whom we worship as with us and among us today is there between the cheerful, smiling men in the wartime tea-break; is there in the love and prayer of the man being killed. Despite the evidence against it, perhaps we really do have a generous, inclusive, loving God in the midst of the carnage and corruption that we human beings often wreak on the earth, on one another and on ourselves.

As Jesus teaches us of his Father's house, may God have prepared a dwelling place for grandad, for Stephen. As we will sing in a minute, *'There's a wideness in God's mercy.'* And in the midst of our doubt and questions, our longing for more, may we not only give thanks for the gift of freedom from those who gave their lives in the war, and endured it, or who gave their lives in love for our Christian faith; but also find encouragement in our day through the Queen's remark that *'we are a still a nation those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen would recognise and admire.'*

May we be satisfied by trust and faith and hope in Christ *crucified* - crucified by the depravity and horror and waste of war; crucified by our partial tendency to prefer our own ways to the way of costly love, joy and peace he shows us - and may we live and grow in love, joy and peace through Christ *risen*; risen in the sharing of love and care, of fellowship and friendship and support; risen in a spirit of hope and a refusal to despair in adversity; risen again among us today.

May God bless and keep us all, and help us to live in the way of Jesus. That is, and will be, enough. Amen.

Rev James Percival, Team Rector



Mum wrote: 'He would raise a cup to you all x

- *Fred Dean, my grandad, far right*