

Dear friends,

The visit from David and Heather Sharland to speak to St. Peter's about their forty years of missionary work in Africa was as exciting as it was occasionally harrowing. From Heather being kidnapped and marched through the bush by South Sudan rebels during the civil war there, to David being confronted by soldiers at gunpoint demanding his supply of grain, to uplifting stories of medical and agricultural successes, this is certainly an extraordinary couple and pretty fearless. How would I react in similar situations? Does anyone of us really know until put to the test. I would like to think that I would find the same strength and moral courage as they obviously did, and they attribute so much to God's loving care for them, but that will always be the big unknown because God's strength, resolve and guidance are only apparent and given when actually needed.

## 14th November – 2 before Advent & Remembrance Sunday

The Venerable Trevor Jones will preside at both services at St. Peter's in the morning. (There is no RBL procession through Budleigh and afternoon service this year). Reverend Ian Pusey will preside at the war memorial service at 11am at Otterton and I will preside at the 9.30 service at All Saints and also at the East Budleigh war memorial service at 11am.

**Daniel 12: 1-3.** Daniel was actually written in the 2nd century BC but refers back to events in much earlier time - a literary device that gives invaluable protection in times of persecution. "The third year of king Cyrus" is 536BC. and nations were believed to have angelic protectors and St. Michael is Israel's protector who will rise up and deliver them from persecution. One of the clearest references to resurrection in the whole OT is here which reflects its late authorship.

**Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25.** The result of Christ sitting at the right hand of God and his "once for all priesthood" is that Christians have an unusual confidence and boldness that leads them to do things that will seem strange to outsiders. There is the expected encouragement to love and do good deeds but also an unexpected sentence about neglecting to

meet together “as is the habit of some”. Congregational decline is obviously not just a modern worry!

**Mark 13: 1-8.** The whole of chapter 13 of Mark is sometimes called the “mini – Apocalypse”. A conflation of events in history and the end of time. The destruction of the Temple happened in 70AD and many see the opening verses as a prophecy of this event. The disciples sharing the same fate as Jesus is also foreseen, and the ultimate end is seeing “one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven” (from Daniel) to bring ultimate and final judgement. The message is that no one knows when the final end will come, but until it does, keep alert and awake.

## Thought for Today

After 40 years in Africa, David and Heather Sharland are going to retire to Heather’s native Northern Ireland and they have bought a remote farmhouse there. David’s only worry is whether after a short while Heather will get itchy feet and want another challenge! Speaking to them both over lunch, the problems of Africa seem almost insurmountable. China’s “belt and road” initiative is truly worldwide in scope and the Chinese are wreaking havoc in the continent, stripping it of minerals and agriculture, in exchange for economic development projects like road, rail and port developments using mainly Chinese labour kept quite distinct from interaction with Africans. They agreed that it was like a second wave of colonialism except that under European domination there were at least some discernible plus points. The differences are stark in terms of medical provision, life expectancy, and security. The odds against people surviving and thriving are huge when compared with somewhere like the UK. We, of course, through prayer and action, try and affect the situation for the better as far as we are able – our entire faith is built on new life emerging from the darkness of death and true resurrection as Harry Williams once wrote is in seeing good emerge from bad in real life situations but we must also take some time out to appreciate the wonderful blessings afforded us by dint of being born into the fifth richest country in the world. It is not evenly shared obviously but the scale of the poverty, material, social and financial and medical that exist here pale into insignificance when compared to the African continent. Count your blessings.

**The prayer for Today** is often called the “serenity” prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr but what is actually being prayed for is acceptance, courage and wisdom.

**God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

Please note my new email address is [vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk](mailto:vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk)