

St James News: Thought for the day – Monday 29 June 2020

Woodbine Willie – by Revd John Marshall

I would like to share some poems by Revd. G.A. Studdert Kennedy. He was a chaplain in the First World War and was awarded the Military Cross. His citation read “For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He showed the greatest courage and disregard for his own safety in attending to the wounded under heavy fire. He searched shell holes for our own and enemy wounded, assisting them to the dressing station, and his cheerfulness and endurance had a splendid effect upon all ranks in the front line trenches, which he constantly visited.”

(The dean of Westminster refused him burial at Westminster Abbey, because he said Studdert Kennedy was a “socialist” even though he had distrusted politicians and refused to join any particular party.)

Woodbine Willie

They gave me this name like their nature,
Compacted of laughter and tears,
A sweet that was born of the bitter,
A joke that was torn from the years
Of their travail and torture, Christ’s fools
Atoning my sins with their blood
Who grinned in their agony sharing
The glorious madness of God.
Their name! Let me hear it – the symbol
Of unpaid – unpayable debt,
For the men to whom I owed God’s Peace,
I put off with a cigarette.

My Peace I Give unto you
Blessed are the eyes that see
The things that you have seen.
Blessed are the feet that walk
The ways where you have been
Blessed are the eyes that see
The Agony of God,
Blessed are the feet that tread
The paths his feet have trod
Blessed are the souls that solve
The Paradox of Pain
And find the path that, piercing it,

Leads through to Peace again.

Work

Close by the careless worker's side
Still patient stands
The Carpenter of Nazareth
With pierced hands
Outstretched to plead unceasingly
His loves demands
Longing to pick the hammer up
And strike a blow
Longing to feel his plane swing out
Steady and slow,
The fragrant shavings falling down
Silent as snow
Because this is my work, O Lord
It must be thine
Because it is a human task
It is divine
Take me and brand me with thy cross
Thy slave's proud sign.

What do you think? Remember the hymn "Who sweeps a room as for thy sake,"

Prayer:

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

- Collect Prayer for yesterday

