

Here this morning we are gathered at this "Stand To" to remember those that fought at Gallipoli and also those that fought in all wars. Especially Australians who have fought in wars over the past 100 years and especially at this 90th anniversary of the battle at Gallipoli. In this remembrance we also think most recently of our service men and women who have been part of the relief effort in Asia.

For me it is not easy to comprehend the enormity of war, it is not easy for me to understand the tragedy of war.

It is difficult for me to fathom that over 8000 soldiers died at Gallipoli. (That is more than double the amount of people who live in Evans Head and Woodburn)

It is hard to comprehend that at the battle of Poziers in 1916 only 95 men survived out of 785 of the 19th Battalion.

Or to imagine how close the Japanese came to invasion came to our shores, or to know what it would be like to be fighting a war when you can not see the enemy or even know who the enemy was like in Vietnam.

Even today when we have had the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq where we had 24 hour television coverage.

It sometimes felt more like a movie than a war.

The tragedy, the destruction, the loss of life, the loss home seems so unreal.

The closest I get to war is the battle I have with my children, or on the sporting field.

But as I read about it, or watch movies or see it on TV there is one word that comes to mind.

That word is sacrifice.

The sacrifice of some to save others.

The sacrifice of some for peace.

I was reading a story the other day that encapsulates this idea.

I read a story recently from a book called the Miracle on the River Kwai.

The Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad had degenerated into a barbarous behaviour, but one afternoon something happened.

At the end of day when the soldiers had to line up a shovel was missing.

The officer in charge became angry.

He demanded that the missing shovel be produced or else.

When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot.

It was obvious the officer meant what he said.

Then finally one man stepped forward.

The officer put away the gun and picked up the shovel and beat the man to death.

When it was over the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check.

This time there was no shovel missing. Indeed, there had been a mis count at the first check point.

The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others.

The incident had a profound effect.. the men began to treat each other like brothers.

When the victorious allies swept in, the survivors, now mere human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors and instead of attacking them they said.

"No more hatred, No more killing, Now what is needed is forgiveness"

One man sacrificed himself for the others.

And it transformed lives.

When we think of war we think of those that sacrificed themselves so that we may live in peace.

That too should transform our lives.

This is also should remind us of another who sacrificed himself to transform our lives.

That man is Jesus Christ.

Easter was just a couple of weeks ago and there we remembered that Jesus gave his life so that we could experience peace with God now and for eternity.

We remembered that Jesus died for all the shovels we have pinched, all our actions, thoughts and words that were contrary to what God would want us to do.

So that we can have peace with God, to stop being his enemy and to start to live for him as our King.

This is transforming news, forgiveness is available for you and me.

The bible puts it this way.

For Jesus died for our sins, once and for all, the perfect for the not perfect to bring you to God.

Knowing this can transform your life.

Sacrifice is a word that speaks to us about those who fought and died in wars to bring us peace, to set us free.

We Australians need to be transformed by that, to live in response to that by making sure that we keep that peace, keep our freedom, to strive to live in harmony, to seek out to be a mate to one another, to show that what our country men and women died for is not in vain.

We too need to be transformed to live in response to what Jesus did.

To give our lives to God, that is To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour's as our selves.

So that Jesus too did not die in vain.