

Memorial Service Weert

4th May 2013

Précis of Presentation by John S R Swanson

I have neglected to think about my freedom – I've always been free.

This evening we remember those who gave their lives to protect our freedom

But what is it? What is freedom?

To understand it we have to define it - It's complicated

Is it innate? - Possibly

But we can't just do as we like - so what about morality?

Is that innate too? – I don't know the answer to that. But let's assume we are immoral.

So we develop moral codes – government – democracy

Does that restrict our freedom?

Possibly – but it's the best bet we have – and for the most part that's how we've structured society.

So what goes wrong?

We live habitually in groups, nations, with beliefs. Something we should celebrate.

But we have mistrust.

We don't trust our fellow human beings who speak differently, have different beliefs and are not our colour

That is our weakness

Strong government protects freedom – weak government can be manipulated by extremism exploiting mistrust.

Within living memory, the rise of Nazism and the fall out from the Second World War are classic examples.

But it hasn't stopped there

Extremism is alive and well

So how do we protect our freedom?

1 We should not forget the mistakes of the past – forgetting is not an option

2 We should remember with care – our victory is someone else's defeat

3 We have to remember how fragile our freedom is - we need strong government to defend it

4 Lastly - and most importantly – We have to teach our children to remember

We have to teach them that we are all to blame and they should not perpetuate the myths.

St Paul's epistle to the Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 10-18 sums up our challenge – and hope.

JSRS 22.4.13