

**A Sermon Preached by the Bishop of Coventry
on the Occasion of the Funeral of
Sapper Guy Mellors
In Coventry Cathedral on 10th March 2010**

Introduction

'Guy lived his dream', said his mother Linda shortly after his tragic death.

Guy's dream was to join the army.

That was what mattered most to him.

He showed a single-minded dedication to that dream as a young cadet.

Later he chose to join the Royal Engineers and faced the challenges of full-time training with the same determination.

Then he entered the theatre of war to fulfil that dream.

It cost him his life.

What sort of dream?

What makes a boy dream that sort of dream and join an army caught up in vicious conflicts?

What makes him choose that most dangerous of callings – the Sapper's Calling – 'the brave of the brave', the 'most vulnerable of the vulnerable'?

What makes a young man risk his own death at such an early age and say to his mother, 'If anything happens to me, don't go on the telly weeping, full of regrets'; though Linda, this does not apply today. Today is a day for tears.

The irony of war is that those called to the front line of battle are fighting for peace.

They are battling for a better world.

They are working for a safer existence for all.

They are making a platform on which the future of children ravaged by violence and oppressed by poverty can be built.

And the Sappers among them?

Well I heard a Sapper on the radio the other day saying that nothing can compare with the feeling that by defusing an IED you have stopped it killing other people.

That cuts to the chase.

Guy died saving the lives of others.

This young man with quite extraordinary inner reserves of resilience, this young man without a nasty bone in his body, this friend to many around the country, this talented sportsman, this skilled and courageous soldier – this young man will speak to us for ever from his grave that some things are worth dying for, and that if we do not have anything to die for, then we have nothing to live for.

The dream of a new world

There are two other dreams mentioned in this service in Guy's honour.

One is recorded in the reading from the Bible we heard earlier.

It is the dream of new world, a better world, a perfected world where 'the old order of things has gone and a new order has come'.

In this coming world, we are told, 'God himself will wipe every tear from the eyes of the peoples of the earth. Death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more'.

This is the dream that Jesus Christ believed in and it is the dream that he lived and died for.

The dream of a world to come where people would be at peace with each other, where they would be free, where there would be no poverty, no sickness and no death.

But Jesus knew that such a world would be hard to build and difficult to bring and that he – God's Sapper – would need to lay down his life for the sake of his friends and for the sake of the whole world.

The dream of being carried by Christ

The other dream of which we have heard in this service is the dream of a person looking back over his life and seeing two sets of footprints in the sand – one belonging to himself, the other to Jesus - except at the hardest times of life when there was only one set.

'I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me', the man says to the Lord.

And Jesus replies: 'My precious child I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then I that carried you'.

Jesus Christ can carry us through death. He has been there himself and come out the other side.

Jesus Christ can carry us through grief. He knows what it was like to lose family and friends and loved ones.

Jesus Christ can carry us through life because he can give us a vision of a better world, a safer world, a more just and peaceful world – a vision that is worth living for and worth dying for.

Conclusion

Sapper Guy Mellors, good friend to many, faithful son to Linda and Bill, heroic brother to Lana and Kia, courageous soldier, Coventrian of whom this city is very proud, national hero: thank you for living your dream.