

A few weeks ago Garrett got word that his brother Christopher, who was suffering from cancer, was now close to the end of his life. Garrett and Fiona set off on the long journey to Australia to be with Christopher and his partner, Yves, before he died.

Today, we gather here in St Mary's not far from the house on the Howth Road in which Christopher would have lived with the family before he headed off first to England, eventually ending up in Australia. At the beginning of the service Garrett shared his own reflections on the life of his brother Christopher.

Christopher would not have seen himself as a particularly religious person, but we gather to thank God for him, for his life as he was in his strengths and weaknesses. I hear of one with a zest for life, one who wanted to experience life to the full. Each of you here will come with your own particular memory of Christopher. I would ask you to hold these memories of Christopher before God and thank God for all that was good and true in his life.

It set me thinking how would each of us like to be remembered? As I do so I turned to the first of the reading chosen for today's service, from the Book of the prophet Micah. The passage is set in the wider context of a judgement on the people of Israel, a people who had lost their way. They were keeping all the externals of their religious practice, but they had lost a basic humanity. And so the prophet dismisses the multitude of elaborate sacrifices, continuing

:8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

I never met Christopher, so I have no memories to hold before me. From my discussions with Garrett, I would not imagine him wanting to be remembered other than as he was, no better no worse. That is the Christopher we bring before God today.

A few minutes ago we sang that beautiful hymn 'There's a wideness in God's mercy'. It comes out of the Victorian era which we would often associate as being harsh and judgemental, so the gentleness and the tenderness is particularly striking.

- 4 For the love of God is broader
than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
- 5 But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.
- 6 If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would fill with gladness
in the presence of the Lord.

So, it is in this spirit that we commend Christopher into the keeping of Almighty God. May he know that peace that passes all understanding, a peace that possibly eluded him in this life, a peace that possible eludes us all to some extent. We extend our sympathy to his brother Garrett, his partner Yves and all who cherish his memory. So let us all hear afresh those parting words of Jesus to his disciples on the night before he died:

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.