

# The Oyster



*"...They die that we might live."*

November 2015

## Tomorrow

By David Trounce

It's Autumn in Scotland. Leaves are falling, no, dancing, as they tumble red and yellow to the ground.

More than a few unsuspecting heads have felt the presence of apples, plummeting to the earth's crust as if there were no tomorrow.

Then again, maybe it's their belief that there will be a "tomorrow" that enables them to fall so readily.

Maybe they plan on coming back.

By the middle of the first century, the scandal that a man in Jerusalem had been raised from the dead reached Greece.

Now the Greeks are no dummies. Modern democracy is built on Greek politics, as is much of our philosophy, science and the arts.

But, faced with eye witness reports and the staggering amount of evidence, many of them had to admit, all things considered, that this scandal actually took place.

The implication was troubling. God had entered into humanity, died for it and then rose from the dead.

Naturally, along with this event came a bunch of questions. One of them was, "Well, what about our loved ones who have died? They



believed in the resurrection of Jesus, but they died. Will we see them again?"

The question was answered shortly after by someone who had seen the resurrected man, Jesus, with his own eyes – the Apostle Paul.

His letter still exists today. You can read it in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

He reassured them of reunion when Jesus returned, along with the resurrected bodies of all who had believed in Him. But he went on to say that those who don't have this hope are, in fact, without any hope at all.

What do you hope for? For your family, your grandkids? The 30 year old husband who spends his Saturdays playing Xbox with his mates has a hope problem. He has the haunting thought that life is worthless, pointless, hopeless. You live, you die – and you're soon forgotten. Is he right?

If tomorrow brings an ultimate "nothing", then what's the point of anything? But, if the scandal is true, we have someone that's seriously worth hoping in. It would be foolish not to take such a prospect seriously.

## **“Died not for flag, nor king nor emperor, but for a dream, born in a herdsman’s shed” - the story of Tom Kettle.**

*“Jesus said, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

*(John 15:12&13)*

### **Edited extract of presentation by Robert Champness at Tanilba Shores Hostel**

Recently I have been reading several books about the western front and, particularly, about a place called the Somme. Forty Australian battalions fought in that action, which commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1916, but before the end of that year it had cost more than 1 million lives. It remains today as one of the greatest of all British military blunders. On the first day of the battle the British forces suffered 57,470 casualties for just a few metres of ground which they could not possibly hold on to.

The story of Lieutenant Tom Kettle of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers is typical of the calibre of men who fought in the Battle of the Somme. It is a story of unimaginable horror, yet it is glorified by love of humanity, and the hope and peace of the Saviour. Tom Kettle was a devout Roman Catholic who believed in a united Ireland, free from British rule. Before the war he was a leading Irish intellectual, and a prominent Irish Nationalist M.P., a lawyer, a poet, an economist and a writer. He was the first president of the Young Ireland Branch of the United Irish League and the editor of the Nationalist newspaper. His life was changed dramatically, however, when in 1914 he went to Belgium to buy rifles for his Irish Republican Volunteers. This was at the outbreak of World War I but he was so appalled by the brutality of the Germans that he likened their occupation of Belgium as similar to that in his homeland – an occupation that needed to be repelled. So, despite being a devout Irish republican, he enlisted in the British army (in an Irish Division).

These are some of the words he wrote while in the trenches. “If God spares me I shall accept it as a special mission to preach love and peace for the rest of my life.”

He also wrote, “I want to live, too, to use all my powers of thinking, writing and working to drive out of civilisation this foul thing called war and to put in its place understanding and comradeship.” If he had lived he intended to write a book on the relationship between Ireland and England. He intended to call it “The two fools; A Tragedy of Errors”. Though a devout Nationalist, because of the war he mixed much with Englishmen and Protestants, and learnt a respect for all mankind. His deepest longing, however, was for a unity which would bring peace to his beloved homeland. He developed such a love for those with whom he served on the battle front that, though he had several opportunities to leave the battle front (including an offer of a promotion) he chose to stay with his men. He wrote, “we are moving up tonight into the Battle of the Somme. The bombardment, destruction and bloodshed are beyond all imagination, nor did I ever think that the valour of simple men could be quite as beautiful as that of my Dublin Fusiliers ... (→ next page)

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I am calm and happy, but desperately anxious to live.” He died just two days later on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1916, aged 36. Before the battle, on the 6<sup>th</sup> September, he had written a little sonnet to his daughter who had been born just a few days before and whom he never got to meet. It reads:

### The gift of Love

In wiser days, my darling rosebud, blown  
to beauty proud as was your mother’s prime –  
In that desired, delayed, incredible time  
you’ll ask why I abandoned you, my own,  
and the dear breast that was your baby’s throne  
to dice with death, and, oh! They give you rhyme  
and reason; one will call the thing sublime,  
and one decry it as a knowing tone.  
So here, while the mad guns curse overhead,  
and tired men sigh, with mud for couch and floor,  
knowing that we fools, now with the foolish dead,  
died not for flag, nor king nor emperor,  
but for a dream, born in a herdsman’s shed  
and for the secret Scripture of the poor.

The significance of the title, 'The gift of love' is, I believe, found in those words “died not for flag, nor king nor emperor, but for a dream, born in a herdsman’s shed”. It conveys the hope and assurances which come to us because of that little stable in Bethlehem, where Jesus, God’s gift of love to all mankind, was born.

His friend and Second Lieutenant, Emmet Dalton, wrote of his death. “I was behind Tom when we went over the top. He was in a bent position and a bullet got over a steel waistcoat that he wore and entered his heart. Well, he only lasted about one minute and he had my crucifix in his hands. He said ‘This is my seventh anniversary of my wedding’ ...”, though he was not sure whether he said it was his seventh or his eighth wedding anniversary.

I wonder what you think of that. To me, it not only speaks of the terrible horror and waste of war, it also speaks of the height to which man can rise through his adversities by the love and grace of God. I’m reminded of the words of Jesus as recorded in John 14:19 – “Because I live, you will live also”. Despite all the horror and difficulties around us we can have this absolute certainty; Christ lives and through Him we can live and know His love and peace in our hearts. Tom Kettle, an Irish Catholic Nationalist, knew that certainty and also knew that the only thing worthwhile living and dying for is the hope that arises from the gift given in a humble herdsman’s shed, some two thousand years ago. “For God so loved the world He sent his only beloved Son that whosoever believes in Him, shall have everlasting life”. Tom’s daughter was called Betty, and she died in an Irish nursing home in the late 1990s, having never known her father but, I think, knowing that one day she will get to know him when that great day of resurrection comes.

God bless you.

## So how do you see it?

We all see things very differently! As a Scot, I saw the result of the recent rugby union quarter final between Australia and Scotland as a travesty – an injustice! If you are an Aussie, you probably saw it quite differently!

I think most people will agree with the Bible when it says, *'it is destined for man to die once'*. I think most people will see life that way. We all know that one day our lives will end. How and when we do not know. Will we lose our life tragically or through illness or old age? We probably hope our children won't have to give their lives like those who gave their life in the wars that we remember particularly this month.

But is there a tomorrow? How do you see what happens after death?

The Bible goes on to say that after dying once, we *'face judgement'*. Do you see it that way? Many do not. A man I spoke to recently said, "Once life is over, he wants to be thrown to the sharks because once you die there is nothing more. This life is all there is."

Christians see that this judgement is something none of us can face, except the Bible tells us that, while *'we are destined to die once then face judgement, so Jesus died once to take away the sins of many'*.

God has provided a way by which people can be saved, prepared for the judgement, ready to face death without fear. Jesus came to die in our place.

For those who accept Jesus as their Saviour and see that their lives are to be lived as followers of Jesus, the hope of heaven awaits.

### So how do you see it?

## About our Church Community...

Tanilba CRC is a Community Church that began on the Peninsula over 50 years ago. We believe in the Bible. We believe that Life is a Gift and we believe that God has created us to know Him and to live for Him in true family and community through His Son, Jesus.

If you would like to find out more about our Church's activities on the Tilligerry Peninsula, we invite you to contact us or attend one of our Regular Activities for more information.

## What's on This Month

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### Women's Get Together

The local get together for women next meets on Friday November 6<sup>th</sup> and December 4<sup>th</sup>, 7pm, Tanilba CRC Church. Call Ella on 0439824507

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### Men's Breakfast

Meets on the first Saturday of the month at Henderson Park, next on Saturday Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> and Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> at 7.30am.

For more information call Steven on 4984 5442

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### Pete's Kitchen

Pete's kitchen is on every Thursday in school term time at 6pm at the Baptist Church, Tanilba Bay. Come along and enjoy a meal among friends and neighbours.

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### Published By Tanilba CRC.

02 4984 5442

Corner of Tanilba Ave and Peace Parade, Tanilba Bay.

Sunday Service 9am

All welcome!