

2019 ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE – MEDOWIE LIONS PARK 06.00

Sometimes things are not quite how they appear.

I was reading something just the other day which sought to clarify some misconceptions that people have around ANZAC Day.

One of the points that the author was keen to address was that the withdrawal from ANZAC Cove was just that, a withdrawal not a defeat. And it got me thinking about how we perceive things. Could you realistically say that there had been victory at Gallipoli? Was it a defeat, or was Gallipoli an example of the fact that sometimes things are not quite as they appear.

By any definition Gallipoli was not a victory for the Allied forces.

The overwhelming sense of the Gallipoli campaign was that in spite of the bravery and valour of the Allied troops, in particular the Australian and New Zealand forces, it was poorly thought out and even more poorly executed.

As we know, the ground attack began on April 25, when Allied soldiers landed simultaneously at various points near the mouth of the Dardanelles. British troops carved out a foothold at Cape Helles, the southernmost point of the Gallipoli Peninsula, located on the European side of the strait, and were soon reinforced by the French. But despite several bloody battles, they never managed to advance more than a few miles inland. Not far to the north on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps established an even more tenuous foothold, having been stopped in its tracks by future Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, then a divisional commander. With both bridgeheads devolving into trench warfare similar to that on the Western

Front, the Allies launched a new amphibious assault in early August. This only succeeded, however, at forming a third static foothold.

The most successful operation of the campaign was the evacuation of the troops on 19–20 December under cover of a comprehensive deception operation. As a result, the Turks were unable to inflict more than a very few casualties on the retreating forces.

Even though the Australians had spent only eight months on Gallipoli in this short time they suffered 26,111 casualties, including 8,141 deaths.

It has been said that Gallipoli had no influence on the course of the war and yet this poorly thought out, poorly executed and ill-timed military offensive had a dramatic effect upon the psyche of a new modern Australia.

It came to define Australians as people who stick by their mates in hard times, people of valour, brave, resourceful, with a kind of good-natured rebelliousness and a larrikin streak and a host of other qualities that would become part of the Australian national character.

All of these things were birthed in what would have been seen as a defeat of sorts.

And it brought to mind an even more significant event that would have been seen as a defeat also. An event we remembered just under a week ago on Good Friday.

In John 19:28-30 we read

²⁸ Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. ³⁰ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

If you were a follower of Jesus, as I am, at that moment it would have been hard to see this as anything other than a defeat yet three days later an event took place that offers hope to all of humanity – a hope available to you today.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

What these events tell me is that things are never at they seem.

What looked like a defeat all those years ago on the shores of Gallipoli accomplished something extraordinary in this nation. It birthed a tradition that countless women and men have followed in the hundred or so years that have passed.

Men and women have selflessly given of themselves in service to this nation. Many have paid the highest price possible. We remember that today and we honour the sacrifices that have been made to enable us to live as we do today.

And that other sacrifice that I mentioned has enabled us to be able to experience a relationship with our God, free from sin, free from guilt, free from shame and condemnation – an abundant life as Christ put it.

These two events, which both looked like utter failures, birthed something significant. (PAUSE)

For our nation, an identity and for us as individuals, a hope for now AND for eternity.

Sometimes things are not quite how they appear. Lest we forget.



[Photo: News Of The Area]

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PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We thank you, O Heavenly Father for the efforts being made by the nations of the world in seeking peace and happier relations with one another.

We praise you for the spirit in men and women that scorns the way of safety and ventures all for the common cause of freedom and right, for all great and noble acts, known and unknown, which we believe by the mercy of God will bring about the final conquest of the forces of evil which threaten the peace and security of the world.

Almighty God, give us grace fearlessly to fight against evil, and to make no peace with oppression. Grant that we may use our freedom to maintain justice among all people and nations, to the glory of your Holy Name, through Christ our Lord. AMEN

PRAYER FOR THE NATION

Almighty God, watch over all those serving in the armed forces and those who still suffer disabilities through sickness and injuries sustained in War, strengthen and encourage those who have been saddened by loss of loved ones, especially children deprived of a mother or father's care and protection. Grant that the same courage and resolution, the same comradeship and service shown in the great struggles in which our country was involved, may now be offered in the greater task of making a true and lasting peace. AMEN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our sins.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

Now and for ever. AMEN