

Thought for the day Friday 24th April - John Reed

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-22

I read a thought-provoking article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* this week

[\[https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/don-t-sacrifice-the-old-but-we-must-repay-our-debt-to-the-young-20200420-p541lk.html\]](https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/don-t-sacrifice-the-old-but-we-must-repay-our-debt-to-the-young-20200420-p541lk.html).

The author, Caitlin Fitzsimmons, reports that there is an argument doing the rounds that the coronavirus restrictions should be lifted, effectively letting those who are more vulnerable (i.e. the elderly) get sick and die in order to protect the livelihoods and futures of those who are being disproportionately affected by the lockdown (i.e. the young).

While acknowledging all the reasons that the younger generation are being hurt more by this crisis, Ms Fitzsimmons quite rightly dismisses the argument as offensive, “because it’s telling older people their lives don’t matter ...”

There was a similar argument mounted when the housing market was going crazy. All these old people living in their big houses should move into units or retirement homes and let the younger generation have their homes. Never mind the long years of work they’ve put in to build those houses and pay for them – they’ve had their turn, and now it’s ours!

The heart of the argument in both cases is that the older generation are a nuisance and are dispensable and should get out of the way to make life easier for the next generation.

Thankfully, this argument has not held sway in any of its guises. Do we really want to live in a society where one part of the population is regarded as being of lesser value and therefore dispensable?

However, the underlying thinking does (as with all good lies) have an element of truth. That is, we are all interconnected. The lives and actions of one generation do affect the following generations. In both good ways and bad.

This weekend, we mark ANZAC Day. This is not a celebration of war, but a reflection on its horrors – and a moment to pause in gratitude for those who suffered and sacrificed so that we might enjoy the peace and freedom we take for granted today. This is a clear example of where the actions of the previous generation have shaped the lives of this current generation in all sorts of positive ways.

However, sometimes it’s true that the actions of our predecessors have affected our lives for the worse. Sometimes we live with the consequences of decisions others have made. In numerous places in the Old Testament, for example, God tells Israel that he will visit the sins of the fathers upon the sons, even up to the third and fourth generation (see, for example, Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). The sins of the past affect our lives today. The sin of Adam and Eve, for example, has shaped the rest of human history.

But God also promises that the day is coming when “The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself,” (Ezekiel 18:20), and “They shall no longer say: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.” (Jeremiah 31:29-30).

That day is when the new covenant comes. Which is what Jesus has brought us. We each stand before God, not judged on the sins of our fathers, but for our own sins. Our eternal future depends not on our family, or our culture, but on our own life and merits.

The bad news is that we will all fail the test.

The good news is that Jesus has done something about that for us.

The bad news is that “in Adam all die,” but the good news is that “in Christ shall all be made alive.”