

Old Ones, New Ones, Loved Ones, Neglected Ones - (some of) you may remember, the words used to introduce the radio programme Semprini Serenade. Alberto Semprini was referring to the music his orchestra would be playing in the programme on what used to be called the Light Programme (known to us today as Radio 2). Old, new, loved, neglected - thus it always was and is when we remember, some memories being good, others not so. Remembering not just people from our immediate families but also the notables of history. I've been pondering some from that latter group: Luther, Bach, TS Eliot. All three have had an important influence on me but also have been the cause of shock and disappointment, discovering they were all anti-semites!

The problem with remembrance is that it can get stuck enshrining those remembered in some sort of "perfect" moment or for a singular achievement. But we can discover that actually they were like us: making bad decisions, having imperfect visions of the world around them, causing upset. Does that mean good works are for nothing?

For the great and the unknown, the old, new, loved, neglected - all of us alike - the great achievements or good deeds we do would logically be for nothing the moment we fall into error, prevented by that imperfection from moving on to an eternity of perfection with God. That's a long time to regret the error of our ways and would also mean that there's no point seeking what is good after the first mistake.

So Jesus gives us the assurance that we can be sorry for our wrongs (sins, btw) here and now, trust that we will be thereby reconciled with God and start again. Our remembrance should, despite the bigger picture of people's imperfections, give us hope of new beginnings.

Perhaps that's how some have risen above the limitations of this life to create such lasting beauty (Luther's clearer vision of our relationship with God and one another, Bach's timeless music, Eliot's poetry floating our minds out beyond its words). For most of us, though, it will be the means by which we can rise to the challenges we will be presented: fight a fair (just?) war, be a good neighbour, help the helpless.

Old, new, loved, neglected - whoever we are, we take nothing with us when we die at the end of this life - except, as the Bible says, the record of our deeds. That's something worth remembering.