

There was just one lad who was fitter than I in commando training. (O lacrimae - how things change!) His name was Paul. He was my friend. The last time I saw him was 30 years ago. Minutes later he was blown up in an air attack at a place nobody had heard of until then: Ajax Bay, East Falkland.

Earlier that day I saw him go out on patrol into the high ground behind our position, while I went on patrol along the beach. That's what we were there for: to go and meet the enemy and overcome him. But the moment of the fatal attack for Paul came as he was clearing away in the field kitchen and I was eating the meal that he had helped prepare and, just a couple of minutes before, had personally dished out into my mess tin. A brief moment of pleasant reunion. (The tactical error of central messing stopped thenceforth.)

I know for sure that Paul would have preferred, given the choice, to go down fighting. But he didn't. He took his fatal blow having fed me. Of such unsung moments are wars also made.

Remembrance season, for a Christian, cannot possibly be contemplated without thinking of Jesus' command, "Do this in remembrance of me." He was talking about being fed by him, accepting his sacrifice as something personal for each one of us. As indeed we try to do each Sunday anyway, coming together in a brief and pleasant reunion, before going back into the world to face whatever might be about to creep up on us when we least expect it.

Remembrance time would seem a bit nebulous if there was nobody to whom we were personally connected (which is virtually impossible, by the way). But I think the point I'm trying to make is that we remember them anyway because they *could* have been our friends, they *could* have fed us. Indeed, they *could* have been us. Jesus, however, is personally connected to us, feeding us, if we would but accept it; turning water into wine, wine into life, bread into real being, questions into faith, death into victory. For Christ's sake - for Paul's sake - remember that remembrance is a personal act for each of us, and for each of the fallen, too, who, but for a slightly different place in time, might have been us.