

Rex Brindle:

Have you read my book?

It is rare nowadays to find genuine people. When I say that I do not mean to demean the rest of us but, to come across a person who you instinctively know rings true. Rex was one of those rare people.

If I were to stand here, and what a privilege it is to do so, and speak the words that people have spoken, the memories that people share, and the stories and experiences that have been remembered, I would still be speaking next week. I know that you don't want that as there is a splendid tea awaiting in the church hall, however, I know that neither Rex nor the family would wish me to let that influence me from speaking what must essentially be said in memory of this quite remarkable man. A man whose life has touched and influenced so many over his 94 years, a loving husband and companion to Hannah for over 70 years, a father and grandfather to Heather, Jean and Marcus, and all their families. He was an electrician, a prison visitor, a local preacher, Circuit steward, singer, swimming champion and instructor, member of the men's forum, but most of all he was a servant of God, and wore his faith and love as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm.

If during my clumsy attempt at this eulogy I tread carelessly on one of your memories, or trample of your experience then please forgive me, for it seems to be and must, I regret, remain a task unfinished.

From humble origins, and lowly beginnings comes the story of a man of God, and like a latter day prophet he was a man of God amongst the people. Anyone who has been 'encouraged' into reading 'tears and rainbows', Rex's life story, could not be moved by the story of this man.

Born on the 30th August 1916 raised in a Glasgow slum in what had been a lock up fruit and fish shop, in harsh surroundings. His father was often changing jobs and after leaving Glasgow they arrived in Blackburn where life was not that much easier, but it was where he first came into contact with the church, at the Palace Theatre. It was there he took hold of a promise that would be fulfilled later in the verse of a hymn, "Now on a higher plane I dwell and with my soul I know 'tis well, yet how or why I cannot tell, he should have lifted me."

It was during this time, taken by his father on nightly excursions to equip both house and table, that Rex's conscience was stirred, and he refused to go any more. As a child Rex discovered his ability to swim, which led to a lifetime's work of swimming and playing polo for Lancashire and England.

Rex has an eye for the beauty of nature, and was thrilled at being able to work outside on the farm, but It was at Christmas when he was 15 that Rex really discovered that the one who really cared for him, was God. His honesty in confessing his former associations with the excursions of his father brought about a change of heart in his employer and a doubling of wages. It has to be said though, that throughout his early life, Rex was influenced and supported by the love of his mother.

It was through his love of swimming that Rex came into the electrical business and his apprenticeship and leading on to his own business as an electrical contractor. A business that was to bring him into contact with many people and challenges, but brought about great respect for his hard work and integrity. It was on one of those occasions when Rex was on a job at King Georges in Blackburn when he saw pictures of the devastations of the Great War, not only on the battlefield but in the aftermath and the breakdown of character, which turned him completely into a pacifist.

On 29th August 1936 Rex was asked to help on the poor children's outing from Queens Hall, Blackburn to Lytham St Anne's that he met the love of his life. The way in which a young lady helper tended a child he had brought out of the mussel beds touched Rex. He was so determined he walked up to Mr Fletcher, an elder at the mission, and said, "I am Rex Brindle, I am an apprentice electrician in my final year, have you any objections to my walking out with your daughter Hannah? If you have, what are they?"

Well he didn't and Rex and Hannah were married on the 8th July 1939 at Queens Hall Mission, Blackburn. A marriage that was to last 71 years until Rex's death a few short weeks ago.

Rex and Hannah first lived at Whalley New Road, then Glenthorne, both in Blackburn, and finally here in Settle. But shortly after the wedding as war was declared, Rex declared himself to be a conscientious objector and was to attend the tribunal that risked his imprisonment. Attended by Rev West and Mr East, Rex was able to convince the judge of his credentials and was discharged from military service.

During the war years the arrival of both Heather and Jean were to bring joy into the lives of Rex and Hannah, and during the war time Hannah was to prove every bit the support that Rex needed in an unfair and often cruel world. Christian faith was worked out in both business and continued their work through the Mission.

Rex and Hannah provided much needed rest and comfort to many servicemen who found themselves stranded in Blackburn. Heather speaks of her childhood with fondness as she recalls going with daddy to Blackburn market and coming home with bags of crabs legs, and sitting round eating the meat, tasting Lancashire cheese and on one occasion with her sister Jean, going to Mark's and Spencer's to buy their first ready made dress and had their photos taken as a surprise for Hannah.

The stories she and Jean would listen to when Rex would do the Fee Fo Fi Fum just like the giant in the story.

He told them of the naughty rabbit who lost his tail. He told them Bible stories and made them come alive, especially when Shadrach, Meshach and To be we go were in the fiery furnace. His support for the girls as they went for their first jobs, Heather at the District Bank and waited in Manchester until she got the job. He went with Jean to the Royal Infirmary when Rex talked to Miss Duncan the matron that Jean was the one for the job and was successful, s Jean proved her worth over many years as a nurse. It was great joy also when Marcus was born, and gave the girls an opportunity to spoiled him rotten.

Rex was always most supportive of all his children, and instilled in them those values of honesty, integrity, and to be who they were and to hold their heads high. Often words need not be spoken, and perhaps I have said too much. But to be honest, loyal and faithful was a way of life not to be snubbed at.

Rex once wrote, "There are times between two people when words seem incapable of all we mean to each other, eyes meet at your coming and going to say volumes of deep affection that makes the written word incapable of. In an old Lancashire word, 'tha knows'.

Rex was a fine tenor, and was a fan of Benjamin Gilli, and loved singing in choirs, and especially when singing Handel's Messiah.

The reading chosen for today is taken from Matthews Gospel, it is in some way a pericope of Rex's life, the way he lived it and loved it. There are many young men in this world who have been influenced by Rex's preaching of the gospel, not from the pulpit although 50 years as a preacher will have done its fair share, but from his visiting them in prison, in young offenders institutions, in the way in which he spoke to people in the street, in the way in which he conducted his business affairs. Although on one occasion when Rex was asked by an inmate to order a magazine for him, and the newsagent had to order it especially, raised an eyebrow when Rex collected it. The magazine never reached the prison it was confined to the bin! The girls spoke of the times when they went into the market in Blackburn, when they went on church walks in the countryside and people would say, 'Hi Rex'. After his move here, people in Settle would all know and respect this man of God who has a heart for the gospel and for his Lord. In the many emails messages, people speak with respect for the man who touched their lives in some special way. One of the members here at St John's speaks in this way, "It is said that some people wear their heart on their sleeve: but for Rex, his Lord was his heart, and his heart, his Lord, ran through everything that he did. Every part of his being was a reflection of his love, in response to God's love for him."

No one was ever unimportant to Rex, every newcomer was welcomed into the church whether here in Settle or in Blackburn. One such newcomer who was welcomed ended up marrying his daughter, Heather. There are many here today who have been so welcomed by Rex.

There were many visiting students and young preachers who were invited back to the house for coffee after the service. One student, an Iraqi Bajan was made most welcome and enjoyed the conversation with Rex.

I have deliberately not brought in my own memories in fear of dominating the time I have available, except to say that after every service I took here, Rex would come to me afterwards and speak words of encouragement, and always ended with a handshake and "I am delightful". It is an honour and a privilege to have been his minister, especially on the night he died when we prayed together at the hospital.

I was shown recently by a friend, a passage from a film, which I would like to share with you, I will give you the abridged version.

"a man looked at the dates on a tombstone, from the beginning to the end.

The date of birth and with tears the closing date.

He said what mattered most of all was the dash between the dates.

For it represents the time he spent alive on the earth, and how it was only those who loved him who knew what that little line was worth.

For it matters not what we own, cars, houses, cash, but how we live and love, spend the dash.

Are there things you would like to change? For you never know how much time there is left.

Perhaps to slow down to understand what is true and real, understand how others feel, be slow to anger, and to appreciate more, and love the people in our lives and love them more.

So when your eulogy is read with your life's actions to re-hash, would you be proud of the things they say about your dash?"

The fuller version as with all the messages will be on display in the hall.

I have spoken for far too long, but cannot conclude without giving the last word to the other constant companion in Rex's life, Hannah his wife. Since her fall, Rex had been her main carer, but prior to, and even during that, Hannah has been that loving and supportive friend that a wife is, and in many ways is in danger of being overlooked by the events in this special person's life, so it is right that she should have the last word, for Rex's life would not have been complete without her.

Whenever I visited, and Rex was repeating himself, Hannah was there nudging him and telling him that it was time to be quiet, and to pray. Here are her thoughts, they are very intimate, but speak of their intimacy and love.

My Mate: 71 years is a long time to be together but we have managed it. We loved each other so much. When it was possible we went together whenever we could. We had some happy times with the children. I have enjoyed going with Rex when he was preaching. He used to ask me to go with him then we could sing a duet. Time went on and we were happy together looking after me until he had his accident.

Then he was in hospital. I stroked his face and said 'I love you Rex'. He said 'Yes, I've always loved you. You are my one and only and always have been.' He took my hand, but we had to leave so I kissed him. He murmured, 'I'm going home'. I could see he was dying. I hope to meet him someday and we will sing a duet together again. Good night and God bless.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which He on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

Ev'n now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentrated all, through Jesu's name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know,
when round His throne we meet!

COMMENDATION & BLESSING

*Donations in lieu of flowers
may be placed on the plate at the back of church and will go
to St. John's Methodist Church.*

*Rex's family would like to thank you for your presence today
and invite you for refreshments at St. John's Schoolroom
after the service.*

Lambert, Settle 01729 822177

A Service of Thanksgiving

for the life of

Rex Guest Brindle

who died 27th July 2010

aged 93 years



Service at
St. John's Methodist Church
Settle

Monday 9th August 2010
at 3 p.m.

Order of Service

OPENING PRAYERS

HYMN

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear –
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness –
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour still our refuge,
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
thou wilt find a solace there.

READING

WORDS OF COMFORT

HYMN

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
and drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary rest.

Dear name! the rock on which I build,
my shield and hiding-place,
my never-failing treasury, filled
with boundless stores of grace.

Jesus! my shepherd, brother, friend,
my prophet, priest and king;
my Lord, my life, my way, my end,
accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,
and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of Thy name
refresh my soul in death!

PRAISE & THANKSGIVING

HYMN

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by His grace,
and bids us each to each restored,
together seek His face.