

same time in our world. He is not limited to time and space or one place. He is always ready to be our friend and helper no matter where or what situation we are in. He sends his Holy Spirit into our world and into our lives. He keeps on performing miracles, keeps on bringing people to faith and giving them a new start with God. He continues today to equip us to be His representatives to those around us.

About 100 years ago a bloke by the name of Jack Moses was inspired by the legend of the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox', so he wrote a poem called 'Nine miles from Gundagai' (I'm not sure why 9 miles instead of 5 miles) In the last verse of this poem he describes the fate of the old dog.

'But that's all past and dead and gone  
And I've sold the team for meat  
And perhaps someday where I was bogged,  
There'll be an asphalt street.  
The dog? Ah, well, he got a bait,  
And thought he'd like to die,  
So we buried him in the tucker box  
Nine miles from Gundagai'

So here is another legend, one in which the poor old dog gets buried in the Tuckerbox.

But Jesus isn't buried, dead and gone. He sits at God's right hand, doing His work, keeping guard over you and me, over our land Australia. Always faithful, always loving, always patiently waiting for us always ready to welcome us home. AMEN.

## THE DOG ON THE TUCKERBOX

(An Australia Day Sermon)

*Pastor Kevin Bell – 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019, Christ Church*

Dear Friends, just like every country of the world we Australians have our great folk stories and heroes, stories and people who sum up who we are as Aussies and what we are proud of as Australians.

On the Hume Highway near Gundagai in New South Wales, is the famous statue of the dog on the tuckerbox. The story goes that a bullocky bogged his wagon in a nearby creek and he went off to get help, leaving his dog sitting on the tuckerbox guarding the wagon. For some reason the bullocky never returned and the dog kept sitting on the tuckerbox, keeping faithful watch until he died. So he continues to sit there today, a bronze statue on a marble pedestal as a hero to obedience, loyalty and devotion to his master, even to death.

It is a great story isn't it? But it isn't true. On some of our trips from Sydney to Adelaide in the last 10 years we would call in and take a break at the 'Dog on the Tucker Box.' On one occasion I bought a little book at the tourist shop entitled 'The true story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tucker Box.' Apparently the story of the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox' was an original old poem written before the turn of the century in a period when the pioneers travelled in bullock wagons, pushing their way in to the interior of Australia. On the main highway at '5 Mile Creek', 5 miles from Gundagai, the bullockies often camped (and later a pub was built there) it was here that an incident occurred that inspired an old push poet to write the original 'Tucker Box' poem.

'Good morning mate, you are too late the shearing is all over,  
Tie up your dog behind the log come in and have some doer  
For Nobby Jack has broke the yoke poked out the leader's eyes  
And the dog.....in the tucker box,  
Five miles from Gundagai.'

Yes that's the original story, that a dog spoiled the bullocky's food by dirtying in the tucker box. What a disappointment. I grew up believing the story of a faithful dog, guarding his master's food and

even dying while he protected it. To me the dog was a real hero, a symbol of Aussie bravery and sacrifice. Well apparently others thought the same, so in 1932 the people of the Gundagai district erected the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox' monument in honour of all the pioneers who opened up that country and the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox' is symbolic of their persistence, their devotion and their courage.

In Mark's gospel chapter 16 we read, *After the Lord Jesus had talked with them, he was taken up to heaven and sat at the right side of God. The disciples went and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and proved their preaching was true by the miracles that were performed.* Mark 16:19,20.

The 'Dog on the Tuckerbox' is only a symbol of our great heroes of the past, they come and go, but Jesus, when he was taken to heaven, takes his place at the right hand of God as the greatest hero of all times. He is not only a past hero, but a hero for us right now. The 'Dog on the tuckerbox monument, near Gundagai, recognises the faithfulness and obedience of the bullockies dog.

Jesus obeyed His Father and willingly gave His life on the cross. It was on the cross that Jesus showed His faithfulness to us, even though we had been unfaithful and disloyal to Him. Jesus didn't let us down. His story isn't a legend, or folk story like the dog on the Tuckerbox. Jesus showed his love and devotion to us by giving up His life so that we could be saved.

Sporting heroes are important to us Aussies. Just as important as folk legends like the Dog on the tuckerbox. Heroes like Don Bradman. In the world of cricket Don Bradman's name stands above all other names. He was the champion of champions. Johnnie Moyes said of him "Bradman was the champion of all time. He set the fields blazing with the burning heat of his genius.' Former England captain Wally Hammond has said: 'If I were choosing a side out of all the cricketers who have ever lived, I would put Bradman's name down first. None of us had the measure of him and that's plain fact.'

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul speaks of another person whose name stands above all other names. He is speaking of

Jesus. 'God *exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.*' Philippians2:9 NIV

The Dog on the Tuckerbox faithfully guarded his master's possessions. Don Bradman time and time again saved Australia and gave them victory by his mighty cricketing talent. Jesus achieved even more. His greatest achievement did for what no folk hero could ever do. Through His death and resurrection He has saved us from defeat at the hands of our opponents – sin and death – He brought us victory over sin and death. Jesus did all the hard work we enjoy all the benefits. We enjoy the glory and triumph of a place in heaven, eternal life with God.

Jesus is no folk story. He is far more than a hero. He is the greatest of champions. He is our Saviour, our lord, our God. By His tremendous act of courage, devotion and sacrifice, He deserves all the honour and praise we can give him. God the father acknowledged this, not by erecting a monument to Jesus but by lifting him up and giving him a seat at his right hand in heaven.

The old 'Dog on the tuckerbox' story says that the dog just sat on that tuckerbox and didn't move. To look at that dog sitting on the tuckerbox, it might seem he wasn't doing anything. But he was actually doing his job. He was working, guarding the wagon and looking after his master's belongings. When Jesus was lifted up to heaven and seated at the right-hand side of the Father he does more than just sit. He rules with power and might over all the earth. He continues to work for us. He pleads and intercedes to the Father for us. He guards us and rules over our world.

Jesus continues today as our active hero. He continues by sending His Holy Spirit to teach us through the gospel, and bring us to a saving faith. He doesn't sit on His tuckerbox but in Holy Communion He opens His tuckerbox to feed us by strengthening our faith, assuring us of salvation and forgiving our sins.

The old 'Dog on the tuckerbox' is just a bronze statue. Over the years they have debated about shifting him, and once some Uni students even stole him for a while as a prank. But 5 miles from Gundagai is where he has sat since 1932. Jesus is active everywhere at the