

## REFLECTION Remembrance Sunday 12th Nov 2023 by Megan Cambridge

### REMEMBERING

We have been remembering quite a lot this last 2 weeks. What people do we remember, what actions do we remember, what events do we consider important enough that we mark them with a calendar remembrance and why do we remember them? Remembrance of significant events is something we do all year round. As a society we collectively remember all sorts of different things, especially those we consider of importance to our identity or history or values.

Last weekend there were Firework displays across the country 'Remember, Remember the 5th of November, gunpowder treason and plot' .... why do we remember the gunpowder plot? Because it's a defining moment in our national story. Through remembering it we affirm our shared values; we remember there are right and wrong ways to respond to a government that we don't agree with. If it had succeeded it would, in modern parlance, be considered one of the biggest terrorist events that ever happened in our country. Another date in the calendar for remembrance is January 27th, International Holocaust Memorial Day. We remember the genocide of millions of Jewish people and by remembering we hope to avoid making the same mistakes again. As a global society we must never allow people to be murdered simply because of the group they belong to. There are also happy events we remember. Many countries have their Independence Day when they celebrate the creation of their nation or their liberation day. In this country we have Trafalgar day and VE Day.

As Christians, remembrance is an integral part of our faith. At Christmas we remember God becoming a human and being born as a baby. In our Eucharist we remember the death of Jesus on the cross, 'At supper with his disciples he took bread and offered you thanks. He broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat. This is my Body: it is broken for you." After supper, he took the cup, he offered you thanks, and gave it to them saying: "Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new covenant; it is poured out for you, and for all, that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me"'. On Easter Sunday, we remember Jesus rose to life again.

So why do we spend so much time, remembering? What is special about remembrance? There are many reasons but the passage from Thessalonians that is our Epistle reading for this Sunday is one answer .....

*'But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.'*

We remember that Jesus rose again; God is a God of resurrection. Paul wants to put the Thessalonians mind at ease about their family and friends who have died. It's a simple message. Jesus will come again and when he comes the dead in Christ will be with him and they will have eternal life, living with God. Paul is so confident that death is a temporary state that he describes it as being asleep. It seems to be a very deliberate. Use of words by Paul. Jesus died and rose again; Jesus died so that we don't have to. Jesus chose to go to the cross and take the punishment that we deserve in our place and so he opened the way to reconciliation with God and eternal life.

What does it mean to be 'in Christ' a follower of Christ? It means to turn our life to him and live according to his teachings and to accept him as our Lord and Saviour. Jesus said 'I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with him and he with me.' We remember that Jesus died and rose again because it gives us comfort and encouragement indeed Paul commands us to encourage each other.

Today we especially remember those who gave their lives through war in service of our country. They left home and family often to foreign lands in the search of justice, freedom and peace; the

effects of which we still feel in our society today. The world could have been a very different place for us without their sacrifice, which cannot and should not be forgotten.

Whether as part of a church service, or at the many community Acts of Remembrance across our grouping, in the silence you will be remembering family members and people of this community. Daily we still see scenes of devastation of war across the world. The 'war to end all wars' did not do so and "man's inhumanity to man" continues in so many places. Bishop David Chillingworth, former Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, reflected on his own experience in Northern Ireland when considering the terrible recent events in Israel and Gaza on BBC radio Scotland this week

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001s48c>.

*"War and violence are like a juggernaut – rolling on with their own momentum. And we watch with horror and pain as that story unfolds in Israel and Gaza. We watch with a sense of helplessness the continuing conflict and the loss of life. But you can't give up on the hope of peace. Medical staff and relief workers toil to bring humanitarian aid. Maybe there are political back channels where the talking is tentatively beginning. Perhaps, as in Northern Ireland, the long slow task of creating conditions for a talking process are under way. And I have no doubt that people with contacts across the divisions are telephoning their friends and talking. And praying people are hard at work holding in their hearts the horror of it all. We should never lose hope."*

Within our service this morning we have a double remembering; the sacrifice of lives in the defence of the freedoms this country enjoys and the remembrance of the salvation bought by Christ. We remember in hope - hope that the kingdom of God will flourish here on earth and that the return of Jesus will wipe away all sorrow and sadness and a new order will prevail.

Our gradual hymn for the service at Holy Trinity, Keith is a well-known patriot hymn. It encapsulates very well the temporal and spiritual remembrance reflected in our service this Remembrance Sunday. Its origin is a poem by diplomat Sir Cecil Spring Rice, entitled "Urbs Dei" ("The City of God") or "The Two Fatherlands" and describes how a Christian owes their loyalties to their homeland and the heavenly kingdom.

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;  
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,  
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;  
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,  
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,  
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;  
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;  
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;  
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

The last verse, "And there's another country", is a reference to the Heavenly Kingdom. The final line is based on Proverbs 3.17, "Her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace." The hymn sets the Kingdom of God as our goal and pattern for living.

Jesus said 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'. So when we remember the destruction the loss of war let us also remember the hope that we have as Christians - something well worth remembering.

