

Remembrance Service 2020

2 Thess 2:13-17

The passage from the Bible that Zuzanna read for us talks about standing firm, holding fast to the teachings of the gospel. It also talks about God giving us eternal encouragement and good hope, encouraging our hearts, and strengthening us in every good deed and word. Today we remember all those who gave their lives for our country in war and we especially remember those who died in the 1st and 2nd World Wars. Mostly men of course, although there were women as well, who stood firm, who did everything they could to hold the ground even when it meant facing death. Many of them would have been Christians and would have been strengthened, encouraged, and comforted by the message of the gospel, by the love of God in Jesus. Of course, tenacity, courage, faithfulness, and self-sacrifice are not just the preserve of Christians, many people without faith have these characteristics. We believe that good and honourable human traits such as these are evidence of all people being made in the image of God, who is only good. Sadly, no human being is only good, the only one who could ever make such a claim is Jesus.

I do wonder what the men and women who sacrificed their lives in the world wars, so that we could live in peace, would make of us today. I wonder what they would think of what we have done with the freedom that cost them so dearly. We can hardly claim that we have made a better society. Although many live in relative luxury there are over 14 million people living in poverty, nearly 5 million of them are children. Hundreds of thousands are homeless and tens of thousands sleeping rough. I wonder what they would make of the leaders that we choose, who often seem to have no moral compass. Not that the leaders of the past were perfect, but there was at least some expectation

Remembrance Service 2020

2 Thess 2:13-17

that they might adhere to a moral code and be honourable people. Can we really say that we are making the best of the legacy that we have been given? Very few of us can remember the last world war, but we do have our own, quite different wars to fight. The current one of course being Covid-19, which is being fought by our scientists and our politicians and leaders and in our hospitals by our nurses and doctors and NHS staff. And although the death toll is nowhere near that of the wars, nonetheless there are hundreds of thousands of people who have and will lose their lives. And all of us are having to make sacrifices, with many losing their livelihood and security. So where do we turn, where can we turn for hope. Well we can turn to God, to Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever, whose very words bring life and hope and whose promises are always true. Will turning to Him protect us from catching Covid-19, not necessarily, Christians are not immune from suffering. Jesus Himself was tortured and crucified. But He rose again and in Him we do have hope and a future, not just a future with Him in heaven, as amazing as that is, but a hope and a future right here, right now. In the midst of all that is going on, all the difficulty and hardship, and fear and uncertainty we can know that we are loved by God, we can know that if we believe in Jesus our sins can be forgiven, we can be reconciled with God and made new and whole, we can receive the Holy Spirit who gives us peace and joy. By His grace we can stand firm, we can hold on to the teachings of the Gospel. We can hold our ground; we can know that we are called to share in His Glory, to know life in Him now and for all eternity. And we can dedicate ourselves, just as those we remember today dedicated themselves, to do whatever it takes to make a better world for everyone, for everyone now and for future generations. If we really want to honour the sacrifice that was

Remembrance Service 2020

2 Thess 2:13-17

made for us, by those who fought and died in two world wars, so that we might live in peace and prosperity, then we can commit to doing whatever it takes to overcome the evils of greed and selfishness, poverty, slavery, war, and the wanton destruction of the planet that God gave us to look after. And so, my prayer for you today is that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our father who loves us will by His grace give you eternal encouragement and good hope and that He will encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Amen