

Remembrance Sunday

Matthew 5:1-12

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All Saints Worcester – 8th November 2009 - AM

Introduction

At times like this, when we attempt to grapple with the contradictions and tensions of human life, questions of faith and the existence of God, naturally rise to the surface.

This week we have had news reports from both the British and US military of soldiers being murdered by their own.

We hear increasingly of our soldiers losing their lives to hidden incendiary devices.

My job is not to pass comment on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is to help us pause and find God in all the madness and mayhem.

At times like this, many understandably reflect and come to the conclusion that with so much violence, evil, tyranny and death being experienced by people all round the world, God cannot possibly exist.

Or if he does, he must be a distant, disconnected, disinterested and angry God who has left us to kill ourselves off.

Many conclude that God, if he exists at all, cannot be good if he **causes or allows** such horrendous suffering to occur. *He certainly appears to be doing nothing to bring an end to conflict and war.*

On this basis, many decide they want nothing to do with him at all.

This of course, raises another question. One which fewer people dare ask, never mind seek to answer: **without God, what hope do we have?**

Some conclude that our hope is to be found in scientific and technological advance.

For others, it is a mix of Dawkinsian and Darwinian evolution that will eventually help humanity to conquer it's own dysfunctions.

A shrinking number still put their hope in our global leaders to find ways for peace to prevail. Indeed, President Obama's campaign used the idea of "hope" brilliantly to reinforce perceptions that he truly could change the world.

A trip through Worcester city centre on a Friday night would suggest that an increasing majority do not hold out much hope at all, and so instead lose themselves in the moment.

The reason why across the country churches are **remembering** is because there is another perspective.

God is not distant and disinterested. God is doing something about evil and war. God **has already** done something about it.

God does not cause the suffering, and nor has He stormed off in a huff, leaving us to deal with our own mess.

He has stepped down in to it, right in to the hurt, pain, conflict and death, to bring **new life**.

The prophet Isaiah told us that “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; for unto us a son is given, the Prince of Peace”.

Not a peace-broker, or peace-keeper. A peace-maker. God has come as a peacemaker. The ultimate peacemaker. The Prince of Peace.

Jesus Christ.

He is the answer to our questions:

- Where are you God? **Here I am.**
- What are you doing to stop the madness? **Conquering death.**
- What is our hope? **The promise of a redeemed and restored creation.**

There is an irony worth noting here.

When the Prince of Peace finally arrived he, too, was cut down in his prime, as the brutal military empire of the first century did what brutal military empires have always done.

And so this morning we remember not only the many who have lost their lives in the quest for peace, but also the One who came in peace, who in dying, made it possible for the world to be changed.

The purpose of remembering is to draw us into a hopeful future.

We live between the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and the final establishment of the kingdom he came to bring, the kingdom in which justice and peace shall be knit together at last and for ever .

And as the church of Christ – people of peace – we are entrusted with a mission.

Not simply to save a few souls from the wreck of this world, since God so loved the world and has promised to redeem it. Nor simply to tinker with the world’s own systems, merely to do things a bit differently here or there.

No: rather, by prayer and courage, and holiness and hard work – and it will be hard work – we are called to discover the practical ways in today’s and tomorrow’s world of seeking justice without violence, of making and maintaining peace without tyranny.

The world sneers and says it can’t be done.

We who honour those who gave their lives, and who do so in the name of the Prince of Peace, are committed to saying it can be and will be.

That is why every act of Remembrance must also be a moment of decision and faith – perhaps for someone here today, to follow the Prince of Peace and become a peacemaker.

It is a rededication of our own lives, to serve the God of justice and the Prince of Peace and to follow wherever they may lead.

Let us pray.