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Wheatthill Priory Benefice

"Jesus Lives: Follow Him"

Worship for Easter 5, Sunday 10 May 2020

Sunday following 75th anniversary of VE day



Welcome to this week's worship. As you know Friday 8 May marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Our parishes, along with others had planned a number of things for Friday and for the weekend. One part of our plans was to hold worship in Kingweston Church, which has particularly poignant links with both wars and the effects of them on the Dickenson family in particular.

The service for today uses resources and readings from the service suggested for 8 May, the anniversary itself. Our prayers are led by from Jane Sedgman .

The Greeting, Introduction and Confession

Heaviness may endure for a night:
But joy comes in the morning.

God has been our refuge and our strength:
A present help in time of trouble.

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:
**Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

May the God of love
bring *us* back to himself,
forgive *us our* sins,
and assure *us* of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

open up to a more normal way of living. We pray too that a reassessment of values and respect, both for others and our world may result in a fresh recognition that life is spiritual as well as physical, so that all may become united in your love.

Father God, we give thanks for the strength and promise of our faith, for the Easter gift of love and forgiveness in our lives. We thank you for the rainbows of this world and the heavenly promise they foretell, a promise of hope in the future, renewal and a fresh understanding of life.

When our world seems strange and uncertain, when we question what we should do and how we should live, when we cannot see a clear way ahead, may we look back at those who walked through those dark days of war, remembering they too could not see the end, were fearful of what might be and lost some who they loved. May we have grace and courage to follow their example and do as they were asked, to go out into the darkness and put our hands into the Hand of God, confident that shall be to us too, better than light and safer than a known way.

Amen

We pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Guide me O thou

Blessing

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, the Queen, the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you always. **Amen**

prophesied here it will be a slow process, recovery and the rebuilding of trust will take time.

Maybe like those rejoicing on VE day, like Zechariah we can look forward to that time. The question is will we have learnt from this time? Will we be ready to return to God in faithfulness and righteousness? Are we prepared for things to be different and to walk into the future knowing that God is there? We go with Him, and He will lead us into that future, just as he led those who came through the war, and as he has led the church ever since then. I wonder are we ready to follow him in faithfulness and righteousness?

Now thank we all our God

Prayers

Almighty God we thank you for the love that will not let us go, a love which strengthens and inspires. Thank you for the men and women, who work and serve selflessly so that others may benefit. We remember this morning the members of our armed forces, both past and present, and especially we remember all those who fought in the conflict of 1939 – 1945, those who came home and those who did not. We remember too those on the home front on land and sea, essential workers of their time, who strove to support, to feed, to help others in many ways and maintain some normality of life and vital services. We thank you for their courage, determination, endurance, faithfulness and belief in the future. May their example encourage us now as we face our own time of challenge.

Lord God we pray for all those affected now by war, throughout your world there are many who live in fear and deprivation through such violence and its consequences. We think especially of all those who suffer in body, mind and spirit, and those who mourn. We pray for world leaders, for a spirit of reconciliation and healing, that the world others fought to protect can grow in tolerance and peace, in unity of purpose and understanding. We pray for our own government, that wise decisions are made in the weeks ahead as we

God is our Strength and Refuge

God is our strength and refuge,
our present help in trouble,
and we therefore will not fear,
though the earth should change!
Though mountains shake and tremble,
though swirling floods are raging,
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

2 There is a flowing river
within God's holy city;
God is in the midst of her-
she shall not be moved!
God's help is swiftly given,
thrones vanish at his presence-
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

3 Come, see the works of our maker,
learn of his deeds all-powerful:
wars will cease across the world
when he shatters the spear!
Be still and know your creator,
uplift him in the nations-
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!
After Psalm 46, Richard Bewes (born 1934)

Readings:

Zechariah 8:3-8

2 Corinthians 5:10-21

Your salvation is near to those who fear you,
that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
that glory may dwell in our land.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

**Your salvation is near to those who fear you,
that glory may dwell in our land.**

Reflection

VE Day was a day of rejoicing and celebration for many. The threat of invasion had ended in 1941, but the war with the consequent injuries and fatalities continued. Indeed VE day was only one part of the end, but it was a tumultuous day for the nation. That ending has been shown in pictures (like the one by Lowry), films and discussions. There was rejoicing, people in the Mall in London, dancing singing and elements of revelry!

Of course this rejoicing was not for all. There were those who grieved for their young men (and some women) killed during the war. Those who did not know what had happened, or who continually hoped that their loved one would be found. Local examples of them would be a Pilot Officer Christopher Hebler who did not return from a bombing raid 12 April 1940. He is not shown on the War Memorial in Barton St David as, it is said, his mother never gave up hope of his return. Then there was Caleb Dickinson who, like so many others, went missing over the North Sea and was never recovered so has no grave.

Others would still be waiting for the end of the war in the Far East, with loved ones fighting, or held in the infamous PoW camps there. No doubt VE Day also held hard work for those who worked in pubs, cinemas or anywhere that people congregated, not to mention the women and others trying to make the food for the street parties held that day.

Our first reading resonates with some of the rejoicing, street celebrations and parties that occurred on VE day, young and old together in the street,

watching or playing (depending on age). It is of course a prophecy that occurs towards the end of the book of Zechariah and like many prophecies at the end of Old Testament books look towards a time when all shall be well, people will be restored, to their homes and land and the former ways are re-established.

This hope includes the Lord's return to Zion, streets full of boys and girls and a renewed realisation that nothing is impossible for the Lord, He can and will fulfil his promises to people through the years and this fulfilment will result in the city's recovery and a return to God, in 'faithfulness and righteousness'. That is the people who have been judged because of their lack of obedience and dedication to God's way will return to His ways and once again walk in His paths. In order for this to happen the people of God, who had refused to repent and to listen to him needed to learn from their mistakes, sins and disobedience and be prepared to learn. This learning took place primarily during the exile when they were once again away from the land that He had promised to them and from the temple in which they met with him in worship.

The nation that rejoiced on VE day, still had a long way to go to recover from war. First the war needed to end, then there was the rebuilding of the fabric of the land, time was needed for the wounds and sorrows of war to heal and slowly recovery occurred. The rejoicing that is prophesied here in Jerusalem, occurred in spasmodic ways but was always incomplete. Recovery and restoration take time.

Today is very different to VE day, and I don't agree with those who liken the fight to that of WWII but we are beginning to wonder what our nation will look like. When will we be able to re-enter churches, or talk to one another in the street without a 2m gap between us. When will grandparents be able to watch their children play in the streets and give them a hug? When will we rejoice? What of our behaviour and the behaviour of nations will change? I suspect that like the recovery from the war, like the return from exile