Home Service Sheet 12th November 2023 (Remembrance Sunday)

You may wish to observe a minute’s silence at 11am as part of your time of worship this morning. By doing this we are remembering all who have given their lives for the protection and preservation of freedom in wars in times past and today.

Call To Worship Psalm 48:1-3

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised

in the city of our God!

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,

is the joy of all the earth,

Mount Zion, in the far north,

the city of the great King.

Within her citadels God

has made himself known as a fortress.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we are reminded of the joy of coming before You in worship, knowing that You have created us and sustained us all our days. In You we find refuge and strength to live out our lives each day, and for this we thank You and praise You. Help us today, as we read Your Word, to receive the comfort, peace and vision for the future that You have shown us in and through Your Son, Jesus. May we be so taken up with the wonders that You have done that our hearts and mouths cannot but cry out to You with praise and worship. To You alone belongs all the praise, glory, blessing and power. Hallelujah! Amen!

Hymn God is our strength and refuge by Richard Bewes

https://youtu.be/bA0zJnW1Rr8?si=vu51LJ0y37VGaJ6f

1 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!

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever, amen.

Bible Reading Micah 4:1-7

It shall come to pass in the latter days

that the mountain of the house of the Lord

shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and it shall be lifted up above the hills;

and peoples shall flow to it,

and many nations shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob,

that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples,

and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war anymore;

but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,

and no one shall make them afraid,

for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

For all the peoples walk

each in the name of its god,

but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God

forever and ever.

In that day, declares the Lord,

I will assemble the lame

and gather those who have been driven away

and those whom I have afflicted;

and the lame I will make the remnant,

and those who were cast off, a strong nation;

and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion

from this time forth and forevermore.

Reflection

On Remembrance Sunday we traditionally think of those who gave their lives for others, serving in the armed forces during the two World Wars and other conflicts. At present we are living in a world where there are two ongoing conflicts: one in the Ukraine and another in Israel. Although we may have our own views on which side is in the right and which is in the wrong, these are not such straightforward conflicts as those in which this nation participated in between 1939 and 1945. Yes, Russia invaded the sovereign state of the Ukraine and has waged war upon that land for over a year at this point, and clearly this is contrary to international law. However, the treatment of ethnic Russians within the Ukraine and other issues muddy the waters somewhat.

The past month of violence and conflict in modern day Israel is even more difficult, and the underlying issues are unlikely to ever be satisfactorily resolved for all those with an interest in that historic land. Many Israelis today believe that they have a God-given right to that land, according to the covenant God made with Abram. Palestinians have lived in that land for well over one thousand years, and have already had much land taken away from them to which they had legitimate claims. We have brothers and sisters in Christ in both Israel and Gaza, who are undoubtedly suffering as a result of this ongoing conflict. How should we be praying as Christians and what kind of solution can we reasonably expect God to provide, and at what time?

These are some of the questions that a good study of the Scriptures will, I believe, help us to answer for ourselves. Our Bible reading from the book of the Prophet Micah looks to a point in the future when conflict will be no more, and God will directly rule over all people. We likely have similar desires to those expressed by the prophet, but our present reality is very different. When should we expect this wonderful future of peace and harmony to begin? In verse 1 we read that this will happen “in the latter days”, and in verse 6 there is reference to “that day”. At first glance this might seem like Micah is referring to some unknown point in the future. However, these phrases are both Biblical shorthand for the return of Jesus in judgment.

In other words, we have no promise of peace between nations until the end of the age. Jesus spoke to His disciples about what must happen before His return. We can read about this in Matthew chapter 24, “you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.” (Matthew 24:6-8) As Christians we have a great hope to look forward to beyond the violence and conflicts of this world.

Jesus, our Lord and Saviour is going to return and we will be with Him for ever. The vision that John received from God tells us that God will “wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4) How much greater will that time be than any earthly armistice, ceasefire or end of hostilities! That is what God also showed to Micah and the people of his day. People from all nations will come together to worship God and be His people. The Word of God will be proclaimed and obeyed by all. Those who have disabilities will be perfectly healed in body as well as soul, and all those who remain will walk in the Name of the one true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the midst of this world in which we currently live it is important for us to lift up our eyes from all the horrors of this age. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and the hope that He has set before us by dying on the cross for us. We need to look to God for comfort and strength, rather than governments and armies. All of these things will pass away in the end, but we are already citizens of heaven, saved through grace by faith in Christ. Jesus is the sure and certain foundation regardless of what is happening in our world. Jesus is still King despite the war in Ukraine and indiscriminate bombings in Israel and Gaza. Let us look to Him and pray for that time when there finally will be perfect peace when Jesus returns. Amen.

Prayer

Loving God, our refuge and strength, bring near the day when wars shall cease and poverty and pain shall end, that the earth may know the peace of heaven. We know that it is Your revealed will to restore all things in and through Your beloved Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We nonetheless ask that You would govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to the just and gentle rule of the Lord Jesus. Help us, and all Your people to keep our eyes fixed on You with faith and trust, whatever may happen in the here and now. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

Benediction

Send us out today, O Lord, with peace and hope in our hearts. Remind us of the most wonderful and effective sacrifice ever made for our benefit, the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. Keep us following You all the days of our life for we ask this in His Name and for His sake, amen.