

Bennochy church: 12th November 2017

We are at the moment working our way through the 100 year anniversaries of the key moments of WW1. At the moment it is the end of the battle of Passchendaele. We like centenaries. It is a nice rounded number, and we use these opportunities to look back and reflect, and hopefully learn from past experiences, so that the same mistakes are not made again. I wish I could be so confident that that is actually the case. Next year, we will remember the centenary of end of the war, 'to end all wars'. That has not happened. We have not learnt from those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The world I see it today, is still ravaged by wars, violence and inhumanity. The world is nervous at what an American President might do or say. That careless word or threat - from his twitter account! There is great instability in the Middle East and Korean peninsula. Where is the end to the violence in Syria and what will North Korea do next? We just don't know. There is the rise of terrorism and proxy wars are played out for power and interests around the world. The relationships between the great powers of the world are again turning frosty. We do indeed live in a world of great uncertainty.

If you read the words of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 24, where it talks about the devastation of the earth, and says, this is the act of God. I want to suggest, we don't need God to destroy the earth, we are making a pretty good job of it

ourselves! And I don't believe that is the nature of the God we worship anyway.

Read the prophets' words carefully. Climate change twists the surface of the earth. In many countries, crops have withered and died and joy has indeed been replaced by great sadness. There is no joy in struggling to stay alive or living the life of a refugee. We have cities in ruins. There are countries in chaos. There are protests in the street and refugees are scattered around the world. We like to think of ourselves as civilised, yet it seems the world has not changed much from the days of Isaiah. Humanity acts, as it always has. In its own self interest.

We need to be careful, that we don't find ourselves in the same position as we are today, remembering the lives of the young once again. Each remembrance Sunday, these words come to my mind, *'History repeats itself. It has to. For no one ever listens'*.

Down through the centuries, lone voices has called for new ways to settle disputes. In most cases these voices have been drowned out. People have not wanted to listen. But this morning, let us be inspired and challenged by what God says in the prophet Micah,

"He will settle disputes among the nations, among the great powers near and far. They will hammer their swords into

plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will never again go to war, never prepare for battle again." (4:3)

As we remember the past, and as we look at the present, how are we to understand these words? I have talked before about the *Shalom* of God. His peace. To be at one with creation, with God, with others and with ourselves. It is only shalom, built on these relationships, that will allow a love for the 'other', a love stronger than our desires for power and influence. Jesus said it this way, it is only a love for our enemies, that makes us sons of God. And that path is never easy.

Can we see the face of Jesus, as our enemy stares into our eyes. That is an uncomfortable faith. A faith that says, all are loved by God. It is not about understanding the other person or where they are coming from. Shalom is far deeper than that. How else will a sword become a plough, or a spear a pruning knife, other than they be hammered on the anvil of God's love and God's grace. That is the strength of God's shalom and the way to seek peace without power. We will never sign great treaties of peace, but to those we meet on the journey, we can offer, the shalom of God. To one and all, friend, stranger, enemy, '*Peace be with you*'.

We all know that life has its own 'battlefields', tragedies and disappointments. As we 'fight the good fight', let us remember the example of Jesus of Nazareth, whose victory was death.

As we remember the sacrifice of the many, this act honour them, and in our remembering, we bring their memories back to life. Amen.