

Dear friends,

November weddings are rare but the one last Saturday was as joyful as any I can remember, and the singing was magnificent. The Welsh contingent were sated with “Bread of heaven”, the English by “Jerusalem” and all brought together by “Love divine all loves excelling”. Steve and Katrina were so relaxed and everyone enjoyed themselves, loving the flow and tone of the service – which was actually quite easy to achieve because the happy couple were so relaxed, forgiving and had a sense of humour. This was followed by delivering absolution and communion to a dying woman. Such dramatic switches in situation and focus require a certain professional detachment from both situations to try and maintain a certain sanity.

Nigh on 120 people came to St. Peter’s for the morning services, including a mother and daughter from Kerala, part of a gently growing Indian contingent who have found a home at St. Peter’s, and welcoming a new couple who plan to move into Budleigh Salterton, who enjoyed the service immensely. Today also, we had a joyous morning service followed in the afternoon by the very solemn service for All Souls. The difference in tone was again quite marked and hitting the right note takes just a little experience.

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at the war memorial service on Saturday 11th (I am in London) but I’ll be back by Saturday evening.

Sunday 12th November – Remembrance Sunday (3 before Advent)

Archdeacon Trevor will preside at both services at St. Peter’s on Sunday morning. I will preside at the 9.30 communion service at All Saints and then preside at the war memorial service in East Budleigh at 11am. Reverend David Fayle (from Sidmouth) will preside at the war memorial service followed by the church service at St. Michael’s Otterton. I will then preside at the war memorial service at 2pm on the seafront in Budleigh Salterton followed by the church service at St. Peter’s at 2.45pm. Then I return to St. Peter’s in the evening to preside at Choral Evensong at 6pm.

Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16. Wisdom in the Bible is personified and always referred to as female. Wisdom is an attribute of God so if you are seeking God, you seek wisdom by default. In Christian theology, Jesus Christ is also referred to as “Wisdom made flesh” because wisdom is entwined with the concept known as the “Logos” which we habitually translate as the “word”

but is related to wisdom. In the Eastern church. Jesus is known as the “Holy Wisdom”

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18. When Paul wrote this (His first letter) he still believed that the Parousia (the end of all history) was absolutely imminent, and he was trying to comfort people that were perturbed that friends of theirs were dying before the “coming of the Lord” and so where were they now? He wrote this piece about joining them in the air, and that they would not precede them into heaven. Basically, the time of your death has no bearing on your salvation, though interestingly Biblical fundamentalists still cling to this notion and call it the “rapture”.

Matthew 25: 1-13. Another piece that attempts to mitigate the “non-appearance” of Jesus at the end times. We must be patient and always be ready for his return because he will come at an unexpected hour. We should be wise and continue to do good works (represented by the oil in the lamps). When he does return that is how he will recognise his flock. Those of us who take a less literal view of the “parousia” see the coming of the spirit as a continual “return” of Jesus. Parousia also means the “presence” of God so where two or three are gathered in my name (in his Spirit) there is Jesus amongst them.

Thought for Today.

Death is the great leveler. Prince or pauper, white or black, Christian, Jew, Moslem, Hindu, or atheist. It can strike anyone at any time and unless our souls and emotions have been crushed by life, everybody reacts in similar ways that reflect our humanity. I was thinking about this as I thought about what to say in the All Souls service last Sunday. Those feelings are again evident today on Remembrance Sunday, though this time modified as mourning loss of life specifically through war. Mainly historic wars like the two world wars, and more recent conflicts (that involved our troops) in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, and smaller wars like the Falklands, Cyprus, Suez. There is rarely, if ever, any time in human history where there isn't a full-blown war going on somewhere, whether that be in Israel, Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan or a myriad other places.

So Remembrance Sunday is a time to pause and reflect on the impact that war has on the individuals caught up in all these conflicts and simply remember and to know that every single one of them was a Father, brother, Son, wife, sister, daughter, friend or colleague of someone and for every person that dies they leave grieving friends and relatives. War is a human tragedy that cuts across all national, social and religious boundaries. Jesus Christ gives an insight, a revelation, or what must be going on in God's heart

as He surveys the ongoing carnage and He must be weeping. The reasons we go to war vary of course, and sometimes they are very good cogent reasons but we should always remember the human cost of war no matter how good the reasons are. That is why the silence at the heart of remembrance is so poignant. A gap – a space – to focus on all the dead and their bereaved loved ones. Time is one of the most important gifts we can give to another human being and on Remembrance Sunday we offer our collective silence to pause and remember.

The Prayer for Today is from the Church of England

**O God of the nations,
as we look to that day when you will gather people
from north and south, east and west,
into the unity of your peaceable Kingdom,
guide with your just and gentle wisdom all who take counsel
for the nations of the world,
that all your people may spend their days in security, freedom, and
peace,**

Love and peace,
Martin