

Dear friends,

We spent all of Friday and Saturday in London (but that's another story) so I was a little tired and stretched for Remembrance Sunday. But I am pleased to say that all the services went extremely well, were well attended, and so after five separate services, including a magnificent choral evensong supplemented by choir members from Sidmouth, I was finally able to relax with a glass of wine and watch the "strictly" results show knowing that I'd achieved all my goals that day which was very satisfying.

Both war memorial services plus the royal British Legion service in the afternoon had real live buglers – No recordings as in past years – which made a huge difference – I always like to keep it real!

Sunday 19th November – 2nd before Advent

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Fr. Peter Nichols Rawle will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Zephaniah 1: 7, 12-18. For some of the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures, "The day of the Lord" when God would intervene decisively to exact judgment, would be a fearful day full of wrath when the corrupt and comfortable (and indifferent) in Israel would get their comeuppance. This is very much like the prophet Amos who thinks and writes exactly the same. This follows a certain implicit logic that if a people had been chosen to be a beacon of light, but instead produce darkness, God's wrath would be kindled.

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11. "The day of the Lord" is still expected imminently by Paul and the early Christians when this was written. Over 2000 years later and the cataclysm still hasn't occurred so this can seem a little inconsequential to modern Christians. But the emphasis is on personal readiness on the behalf of the Christian, who is to remain on high alert, showing righteousness and integrity even if some fall by the wayside. For the Christian it can be deduced that the day of the Lord is always now!

Matthew 25: 14-30. Jesus was not moralising generally about the right use of personal gifts as so many preachers do today. Set in context this was a parable about the pharisees who hoarded the light (the law) that had been entrusted to them when it was meant for the whole of mankind. God's good and just law was being hoarded and so God is getting no good return on his capital. They are guilty of defrauding God. If a more general moral is to be

discerned it is not to keep the gospel to yourself, but to make it visible and known.

Thought for Today

Courtesy of the fact that I am officially an ex-serviceman (Don't ask!) I am entitled to stay at the Victory services club when we are in London – a lovely place near Marble arch just off the Edgware Road. Membership is actually open to people from all parts of NATO, so the clientele is very diverse, but they exude a very British outlook which includes a great bar and a full English breakfast. I can't remember the last time I enjoyed fried bread (instead of the ubiquitous hash browns) with my bacon and eggs! How different London is – huge, culturally diverse, packed with every diversion known to man. So different from the West Country (and the Northeast before that) where I have lived. I feel very much like a country bumpkin nowadays when I visit, a little anxious and out of my depth. This is where you need an anchor to hold you in place and keep you secure amidst the confusing currents of a big city. That cultural anchor might be a full English breakfast with fried bread or a pint of Bitter but spiritually our anchor is Christianity, and it doesn't matter which denomination either. We spent some time in Marylebone – after the Wallace collection and before our lunch reservation – at a beautiful Roman catholic church on Saturday that provided that spiritual anchor I needed so much. St. James's, Spanish place, Marylebone was the anchor that settled my soul and comforted me before stepping back out into the maelstrom of London's hard streets. It was St. Augustine that said, "You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

The Prayer for Today is rather special as it has been composed by the children of St. Peter's school.

Dear Lord,

We are grateful for school meals as we know that many children go hungry and we are very lucky to have water because in many countries they don't have fresh water at all. We pray that you end all wars, especially those in the Ukraine and in Gaza. We thank you for our education and for all the things we learn including our times tables, PE, DT and for all the materials that you provide us with including our Chromebooks. We thank you for our swimming pool as we know not many schools have them and it's a real privilege. We like that we are going on residential and we appreciate all the efforts that our teachers put in, and the nice things that they do for us. We also thank you for our

PTA, our governors, and our parents, who are taking the time out of their busy lives to make us happy.

Amen

Love and peace,

Martin