

Dear friends,

Saint Peter's church looked beautiful – it always does – but especially so, decked out for Harvest Festival. Over 100 people attended that morning and Louise and her parents David and Linda joined me for the Harvest lunch at St. Peter's superbly catered by Mandy as so often. The lunch was packed with 67 people but we all made a pretty good fist of finishing off all the superb food – nothing was wasted.

Louise told me that St. Michael's had been very well attended as well with around 50 people. Of course, neither of us was at All Saints but I haven't heard anything to the contrary so I'm going to assume that everything passed off fine there as well especially as I was told there would be bacon baps after the service!

NOTE: There won't be an email for a couple of Weeks because we'll be in the wilds of Nepal. (It's a hard job but somebody's got to do it). I look forward to seeing everybody on my return.

Sunday 13th October – 20th after Trinity – Proper 23

I will preside at both services in the morning at St. Peter's and I will also preside at Choral Evensong in the evening. Reverend Colin Randall will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11.00 respectively.

Amos 5: 6-7, 10-15. Ah, Amos, my favourite and earliest prophet (around 722 BC). No nonsense, brusque, and takes no prisoners he is railing against the corruption of Justice by the offering of Bribes and the exploitation of the poor. Whether he'd want anyone to repent just because they were frightened of the consequences is an unanswerable question. The call to "seek good and not evil that you may live" is what Paul and the early Christians would call Metanoia or repentance – a complete transformation in our moral and ethical compass.

Hebrews 4: 12-16. God's word is living and active and piercing and is able to get under our skin like no other thing. God's discernment and judgement is quite an unsettling thing and makes us nervous. We have to give an account of our actions and in such unsettling circumstances it is comforting to know that Jesus was also human and understands our flaws and frailties completely. God's judgement and mercy are never far apart.

Mark 10: 17-31. We all have a flaw, however upstanding we appear, that has the potential to undermine everything else. This was an otherwise morally good man but he was overly fond of wealth and possessions, so Jesus challenged him to give it all away. If our overriding preoccupation is the accumulation of more and more “things” (no matter how much we already enjoy) this becomes tantamount to idolatry. You have replaced love of God with love of money. Jesus hints that in the end time there will be a giant re-calibration of the worldly order of things where God’s values will be the final arbiter. The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

Thought for the day.

We received a thank you email from the Disaster Emergency Committee for our contribution to the Ukraine relief appeal. That just served to remind me that there is actually still a war going on in Ukraine. You’d hardly know it though because all you ever hear about nowadays is the Middle East. Incidentally, we were flying over the middle East on October 7th last year on our way to India just as the Terrorists invaded and started their murderous rampage. There are over one hundred armed conflicts going on in the world at the moment. Some of them really huge like the war in Sudan where tens of thousands have been killed and infrastructure has broken down and starvation is rife. But yet again, you’d hardly know it because it hardly ever breaks into the news headlines. We’ll be visiting Sri Lanka next year, but did you know that one of the most vicious genocidal 26 year long wars of modern times has relatively recently just ended 15 years ago? Probably not, because the criteria for a war to be newsworthy is surprisingly opaque and baffling. The mass indoctrination, re-education and sterilisation of an entire people, the Uighurs in China – no? Mankind has been warring, subjugating and invading since the year dot. Sometimes the wars are truly huge like the first and second world wars and others more localised conflicts such as Afghanistan. Pacifism as I always say is a noble position to take and obviously peace is better than war. I have had many discussions with many sincere and honest pacifists but my mind may have been swayed but never fully convinced. Peace yes, but not at any price, which is why I (and the church of England incidentally) are not pacifist. That would I think dishonour all the people that fought and died that we remember and commemorate on remembrance Sunday. There is a complex web of reasons why wars begin ranging from the just to the banal and in my view, some wars just must be fought. Does that mean that we stop praying for peace in the world? Of course not – but a glib “peace at any price” attitude is not something that can hold water above the purely individual level. That attitude would see Israel and Ukraine annihilated with the subsequent death and /or enslavement of millions. Some things are worth fighting for, including your own survival.

The Prayer for Today is by Trevor Huddleston, a monk at Mirfield, where I trained, and he was a huge influence in the fight against Apartheid back in the day. It is a simple prayer that can be applied to any nation so today I apply it to our own.

God bless the United Kingdom,

**Guard her peoples,
Guide her leaders,
And give peace,
For Jesus Christ's sake**

Love and peace,
Martin