

**A Sermon Preached
at
St. George's Madrid
by
The Reverend Canon John W. Kilgore, M.D.
10 November 2019
Remembrance Day
Micah 4: 1-5
Matthew 5: 1-12**

Blessed are the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Look at this two directional view of this passage. Blessed are those who have had difficulties, looking back, but also promising them, that theirs is the kingdom of heaven, looking ahead.

I think perhaps Remembrance Day is like that, or should be. Two directional. Looking back, but also looking ahead, to the future.

This is the 101st anniversary of the end of World War I, hailed as the war to end all wars. But since then we have had World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Six Days War, the Gulf War, strife and genocide in Rwanda, Sudan, the Middle East, Syria, and a war of words among differing factions in so many of the countries of the world. Peoples' lives have been lost and disrupted by war for how long? Most of us here, though not all of us, have been relatively unscathed by war, but it is a fact of human existence. And so difficult and painful. And yes, it is important that we remember.

Why is there war? Why does God allow war? If God at all 'allows' anything. Perhaps war is that common denominator that brings us to our knees, challenges us to our core, and calls us to get to know our God. To call upon God. In our first hymn we sang, 'Be thou our God while troubles last, and our eternal home.' Seems like it ought to be easier.

Our challenge is what to do with the existence of war in our human condition. Clearly we are to look back, to remember, as has been done so well with this tradition of Remembrance Day. 'We will remember...' we say. And we do. And in a few minutes we will hear the words of the Kohima Epitaph: 'When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.' Yes, we do remember. And give thanks for what they gave.

But I would like to suggest that we are also to look forward. That we are to look both backward and forward at the same time. Somewhat akin to the philosophical and theological term of anamnesis — looking back into oneself at the same time seeking the future. For our Christian faith is that — looking back into our history and forward into our promises of future life and Resurrection.

And I think it is so important that we indeed do so, look forward when we are also looking backward. Erich Hoffer wrote, "In times of change **learners** inherit the earth, while the **learned**

find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.” Jesus modeled that with the Resurrection, and calls us to look for his coming again.

So how do we do that? Our first reading was from the prophet Micah, chapter 4. But just a bit later, this prophet counsels us saying, “But what does the Lord God require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Great counsel for living.

So how do we live with this tension of always having war, looking back and remembering, while we also look to the future.

King George VI summed it up well in 1939 when he essentially established the British tradition of the Royal Christmas Broadcast. It was then, when from Sandringham Castle he said, “A new year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall be. If it brings us continued struggle we shall remain undaunted...” And then he quoted from the poem by Minnie Haskins ‘The Gate of the Year’ (1908).

“I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’ And he replied, ‘Go out into the darkness, and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.”

In the intercessions today we prayed, we prayed ‘God give peace’ five times. And in our first hymn we sang, ‘Be thou our God while troubles last, and our eternal home.’ Soon we will sing that famous hymn For All the Saints. Looking backward and forward, at the same time. And in the opening Collect of this service we were charged to ‘to work for ‘reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice, and peace.’ Backward and forward at the same time. Anamnesis.

Yes, it is important for us to look back and remember. But it is also so important for us to look forward and to put our hand in the hand of God and to be the peacemakers and peacekeepers that our collect and prayers and hymns in this service call us to be.

Work for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, ‘live in freedom, justice, and peace.’ And go out and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.

Amen.