

Sunday 12 September 2021

11.00: free Church

Prayer:

heavenly Father

We come together in the name of Christ

to offer our praise and thanksgiving,

to hear and receive God's holy Word,

to pray for the needs of the world,

to seek forgiveness for our sin that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to service to God and our fellow men and women.

Lord Hear our prayer

Amen

Sermon

Text: Mark 8 v 31: Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things.....

Intro: It is human nature to sanitise history, particularly, but not exclusively events that mark a turning point in national affairs. The ceremonial dress (guard order) of the Brigade of Footguards is the tall fur hat, originally worn by Napoleon's "Old Guard" a reminder of the part those regiments played in the battle that once and for all ended Napoleon's dreams of world domination. It is unlikely that any of the soldiers so attired thinks of the reality of the battle of Waterloo – the mud, the rain, the noise, the wholesale slaughter of a proud army. They remember, if they think at all, a victory that changed history in which their regiments played a significant part.

One: There is a price to be paid for every victory, and too often those who paid the price are forgotten in the remembering of a significant event. Our Gospel reading, verses from St Mark's account, tell of a warning of what was to be the most significant event in human history. For over two centuries the Jewish people had looked for divine intervention in their history that would restore an imagined former glory. There was a price to be paid, but it would, in the popular imagination be paid by a defeated Roman army, sent ignominiously back to its native Italy as Jerusalem reigned supreme in its own land and from its own temple.

Of course it didn't happen like that and in saying so, the words of Jesus were a profound shock and an offence. The price of victory would be paid, not by foreign troops but by God's Chosen One. The words of the prophet Isaiah were forgotten or discounted as Jesus spoke plainly about a future that they could neither believe nor imagine.

Subsequent generations have sanitised the truth with gold and jewel encrusted statues and pictures. 19th century hymns hide the reality of the Cross behind memorable tunes and singable poetry.

Two: Today marks the beginning of Battle of Britain Week. Tomorrow, if tradition is followed, a Spitfire will fly over City Hall in Norwich, successor to the many that filled our skies to drive away the attacking hordes of the Luft Waffe.

This week in towns and cities across our land, medals will be worn by men and women wearing the blue uniform of the RAF and also by veterans of former years, reminders of years of service and experiences that can only be properly shared with those who were there.

These are not matters of rejoicing but reminders of the price paid by friends and comrades, past and present, known and unknown for the life we enjoy.

The price of our freedom was paid in exhaustion, broken relationships, lost youth, social life disrupted. It was paid, if not willingly, at least unstintingly so that our life is not what it might have been, but is lived with at least a measure of freedom.

The words of Mark's gospel, read to us today, speak of the commitment of Jesus, and of the commitment of those called to follow him. Jesus spoke, not of a glorious victory, although there would

indeed by victory over the power of death, but of suffering to come. This did not go down well. God's Chosen one was not supposed to suffer, he would win a great victory. But like all victories it came at a price.

To be part of that victory we must face up to the cost of being a disciple, a student of Christ. Strength, courage, love loyalty, faith are all involved as those early disciples were to learn. They stayed with Jesus through the time of crisis and might well have remained with their hurt, their wounds, frightened, disappointed, disillusioned.

But there came a turning point, what we call Resurrection, when they were transformed.

Conc: The message of the Cross is a powerful symbol of our faith, not a sign of defeat by a reminder of what followed.

81 years down the line, we remember those who paid the price of victory. The secret of the Cross of Christ, the knowledge of God's transforming love and power enables us to face today and tomorrow and to see hope for ourselves and the world. The knowledge of great events in our own national story enables us to renew our own commitment to what is good and right and gives us hope for our own time.

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord our God, you are a refuge and strength for those who trust you. On this day we give you thanks for deliverance granted to our nation in the Battle of Britain and remember with gratitude those who paid the price of that deliverance. Teach us as we remember them to remember also your unfailing mercy, to offer our lives anew to your service and always to use our freedom to give you glory.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Lord, hear our prayer for the world.

For those who prosper, that they may remain humble and grateful for your mercies.

For those who suffer, in body or mind, that they may find healing

For refugees and homeless people that they may find love and shelter

For our community that we may play our part in building it up

for friends and family and all whom we love

Lord hear our prayer

Amen