

10 May 2020 Compline St Mark's 7pm

Reflection: VE Day 75<sup>th</sup>

*Ps. 147:1-13 & Zech. 8:3-8*

During this month of May we have a theme for the Night Service of one of thankfulness.

Current circumstances for most of us may, of course, cloud any such vision of thankfulness, but I would suggest that these readings do offer us encouragement for the future.

Over this weekend we have seen commemorations of the ending of the war in Europe in 1945. Many of us will have family connections to this event. For me, my connections include my late Uncle Reg, who was a prisoner of war in Burma, and who did not come home until well after VE Day. A more positive occurrence was the bombing of my father's school – which meant he had to attend a new school where my mother was already a pupil. The romance – eventually – blossomed.

But there will have been many in 1945 who had no reason to celebrate on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May – as the people with whom they would have celebrated were never coming back.

On Friday my wife Cath and I joined in a socially distanced VE Day afternoon tea on our street. What struck us most, as we walked up and down the street to observe people in their front gardens, was not any sense of jingoism, but a willingness to make a connection with others – people whose front doors they had passed each day without a second thought, and who were now engaging with others. And, as in the Zechariah passage, there were boys and girls playing in the streets.

As a politics teacher I take students to London every year to visit the Houses of Parliament, and we let a chance to walk down Whitehall to Trafalgar Square. On this walk we see many statues dedicated to military personnel – General Haig, Jan Smuts, Horatio Nelson. But what I have noted in recent visits is that the more recent statues are not reflecting the military, but the ordinary people who have meant something in other ways – Pankhurst, Mandela, Fawcett, and the ordinary Women of World War Two who were not military leaders but whose service was invaluable.

What struck me as I pondered on these, and on the two scripture passages, is that we – as a society – are further and further removed from the horrors of war on these islands – and for that we can be thankful. In verse 10 of the Psalm we are reminded that God takes no pleasure in those things that might impress others – which would include physical or military strength – but rather in those that fear and love the Lord.

I have been so impressed with the love and service that ordinary people have shown in this modern day 'exile'. And it confirms to me that God is with us, in the grass growing on the hills, in the giving the animals their food, but also in the lives of our fellow human beings.

As we now move into a period of silent reflection we might like to allow our minds to focus on what we can be thankful for this week...