

12th November

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Read Romans 12:9-21, Matthew 5:1-10: Jesus is Peace

As we come to another Remembrance Sunday, sadly we continue to live in a time of war, a time of uncertainty. We have the on-going war Israel and Gaza, the Ukraine and Russia. And there are also conflicts continuing in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and something like another 24 other places in our world. And we face climate change with strange and violent weather affecting all life on earth. And there are the challenges of global national and personal poverty. And global pollution, public disorder in our own nation, and a lack of trust in political, financial, and social leadership. Our world is a bit broken. It is a dark world.

I'm struck by the number of conversations I'm having with people which express fear about what kind of world we're in. What kind of people are we going to be in this situation? What does it mean to be someone who believes in God in this situation?

Paul wrote: 'Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.' (v.12) How can we be joyful people and patient people in today's situations and circumstances? I think Romans 12 helps us.

But I want to start with what Jesus says: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' (Matthew 5:9)

God invites us into family, and if we reach out to God and receive that invitation of God, we are part of his family. Family is important to us, we want to be a people who belong and God calls us into family, his family. God says 'come' and be loved, come and know and be known, be part of my family. Join in with the family life, take on the family values and likeness. God is in the business of peace-making. 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God.' God wants us to have peace with him, he wants us to have peace with his world, with creation, he wants us to have peace with each other and he wants us to be at peace with ourselves.

Many of us don't live in peace with ourselves, and many of us don't live at settled peace with others. We might agree with much that we read in our Romans 12 reading about loving others, and we might believe this is how we behave. But many of us also have those that we make exceptions, those who are outside our circle of love for whatever reason. They may have wronged us, insulted us, or those that we do love. We may be signed up for blessing those who persecute us, not repaying anyone evil with evil, and defeating evil with good – but just not them!

There was, and is, no one outside of Jesus' circle! He loves us all, so much that, while we were still far off, his enemies, he gives us life for us. Christians and the Christian Church should reflect God's character. Taking on his family likeness. We should, and need to be, an example to others of how to live in peace. Jesus longs for us to live in peace with him, his father, and with each other – read John 17.

The world needs more than ever to hear about this God of peace, the one who gives life, hope and belonging. We can be joyful in hope, we can be patient in affliction, and we can be faithful in prayer (v.12) pointing others to Jesus, living lives of love and peace.

Read again the Romans reading and commit yourself again, to be a person who lives in the likeness of Jesus, being a peacemaker in your family, communities, and as much as you have influence, in the world. And, commit to praying for peace, for the peacemakers in the families, communities and countries suffering from conflict.