**Sermon-Remembrance Sunday 2022**

I expect you’ve watched the Boat Race-but it’s a curious fact that the rowers , who drive the boat forwards, actually face backwards! This could be a picture of the Remembrance Sunday Service. We look back with gratitude, before God, at those who died in two World Wars & other subsequent conflicts to help us, aided by God, to move forward in this troubled world-lest we forget their example & role of the fallen, as we try to seek peace & pursue it. In a nutshell, we look back to the PAST to cope with the PRESENT-learning with thankfulness from their heroic qualities in the past &, maybe, a better way to deal with the present.

As we look back to the past-those dark, uncertain & worrying times in 1914-18 & 1939-45, we give thanks for the sacrifices made, the hardships, sufferings & loss borne with such guts & resilience shown by the Armed Services & civilians. They, under God, achieved our nation’s survival. It’s now, 104 years since 1918 & 77 years since 1945, so are we too remote from those dark days, familiar to our parents, grandparents & great grand parents? Can we appreciate those days that needed sacrifices, posing uncertainty, hardship, possible death or injury loss & even total destruction? Days lightened by the “wartime spirit”-my mother said ‘at least, we were all in it together’.?

Are we so remote? In 2022 the new word is ‘permacrisis’. We have had our own dark days-starting in 2008 with the financial crisis, austerity, then the pandemic &, now, a crescendo of war in the Ukraine, climate change, recession, inflation & the cost of living crisis. As we look back, gratefully, at the great sacrifices made in conflicts starting with two World Wars, we can, prayerfully, ask to receive in the present the same inspiring qualities shown then-the same willingness to face down evil intentions whether of the Nazis, of elements in Imperial Germany or of Putin. We need to pray for resilience for the Ukrainians & ourselves to roll back oppression & seek peace & pursue it.

Our reading-Rev. 21: 1-7 reminds us, in our dark days to look up to see the FUTURE-Christian Hope. Revelation was written in the last part of the first century AD-an era of great persecution of Christians. They needed reminding of God’s intentions in the end times –they would be encouraged, as they looked forward to His Second Coming, that He would return to put right all the wrongs of the world. They would see three NEW things.

In vv1 & 5 a NEW earth & a NEW heaven will be made-the old would go-the sea, representing Chaos & uncertainty then, would vanish as would ‘death, mourning, crying or pain’, so familiar to us, for God ‘will wipe every tear from their eyes.’ What a tremendous prospect! Even the Church, the company of faithful believers, which looks so dishevelled, ragged & bruised will become beautifully dressed. v2. A NEW relationship with God is offered v3. Corporately, God ‘will live with His people…& be their God’, while, individually, God says ‘I will be his God & he will be my son.’ v7 What an amazing offer & it can, start now by faith, though it will arrive fully at the Second Coming. Lastly, NEW drink is mentioned v6. ‘to him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.’ This water represents something or Someone, who really satisfies, if we are thirsty. So often materialism, wealth or fame is suggested as fully satisfying, but so often is not. We seek something else. Queen Victoria lost her father as a baby & spent the rest of her life seeking a father figure-in 1837 her first PM, then her husband & later others but unavailingly. So we should hang on to these 3 of the elements of Christian hope in dark days, as we look to the FUTURE. For the PRESENT, we must take the Acts of Penitence & of Commitment in this Service seriously. We are grateful for the legacy of the fallen-their sacrifices are not forgotten-their qualities can inspire us.