Sermon on Remembrance Sunday 19th Nov

Readings: Micah 4:1-5 Matthew 25:1-13

In our reading from Micah the prophet has a vision of the second coming of Jesus, when God’s kingdom fully comes to earth. And his prophecy says that many nations will come – Jesus came to save the Jews and the Gentiles – and God will teach them, so that they will walk in his paths. When we look with sorrow at the news today, what a difference it would make if all nations were to walk in God’s paths now.

The prophecy tells us that when Jesus comes again, God’s law will rule and He will be the judge between people. Then swords will be turned to ploughshares and spears to pruning hooks. And nation WILL NOT take up sword against nation – our world is crying out for this so much today.

Micah continues, everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will be afraid. There will be enough for everyone – everyone will have their own vine and fig tree – no one will be jealous or try to take what is not theirs. One person will not have two vines and another none. There will be no fear.

This is an incredible vision of our future and is our hope.

In Matthew 25 Jesus tells us that we do not know the time of His second coming, only God knows the timing and so we need always to be prepared.

In Jesus’ time, as now, a wedding was a huge celebration – often lasting a week and involving pretty much the whole village. At our services now the bridegroom waits in the church for the bride to arrive. Whereas then, the bride would be ready and would wait for her bridegroom to arrive.

The brides unmarried relatives – like bridesmaids today – would be on watch for the groom and would welcome him when he arrived. Once the ceremony itself started the doors would be locked and any late comers were not allowed in. So Jesus uses this easily understood imagery to describe when He will return in glory. And in His parable 5 bridesmaids were foolish and 5 were wise.

At that time you could not go out in the dark without a light, so the waiting bridesmaids needed lamps, lit by oil incase the groom arrived at night, so they could go out and welcome him in the dark. In Jesus’ parable the foolish bridesmaids did not have oil and were not properly prepared.

The groom arrives at night and the wise bridesmaids light their lamps, go out and welcome him and join in the celebrations. But the foolish bridesmaids need to go and find oil and when they eventually return they are too late and they are locked out of the celebrations.

Jesus concludes ‘keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.’

Only God knows when Jesus will come again and so the message for us is clear: We must keep watch and be prepared, we always need to have oil in our spiritual lamps.

The challenge to us is to prepare our hearts and lives now – to seek forgiveness, to listen to God and to live in relationship with Him. To be watching and listening for His Holy Spirit in our lives and in our situations.

We need to be patient and trust in God’s timing as it is perfect.

When Jesus returns there will be judgement, but Christians stand forgiven through Jesus sacrifice. So, it is our choice whether or not we accept Jesus as our way, our truth, our life. For when He does return again we want to be part of those incredible celebrations – living under God’s rule, when as Micah predicts there will be no war, no fear and enough for everyone. God’s love ruling earth as it does in heaven.

Prayer: Almighty and eternal God from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted, either by death or life, hear our prayers and thanksgivings for all whom we remember this day. We hold before you all who have died in active service. As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen