

Remembrance Sunday 2020 Micah 4:1-5

Remembrance is an act which calls to mind events and people of both past and present. It is a time when we remember all those who have given themselves for others, especially in two world wars, in the many conflicts since then, and this year we also remember those who have lost their lives seeking to save others from the coronavirus.

Memories are powerful, they help make us into the people we are today, and help us to relive our experiences, linking us with the past.

eg. *Lock-down has given many people time to think and to remember. I've been looking through some old diaries, remembering people and places from my ministry and family..*

Memories are more than simply dwelling on the past, not just nostalgia. They are a link with the future, our way of learning the lessons from the past in order to guide us in our living in the present. We hope we learn from our mistakes, but I wonder! When we do, memories can be the source of our hopes, and of a vision for a better world for our children and our children's children. Surely, every parent looks back at their own life, and wants something better for their children.

Taken literally the word '**Re-member**' is the opposite of '*dis-member*'...

To '*Re-member*' is literally '*to put together again*', *to heal*, *to reconcile*.

This was at the heart of Jesus' ministry. The gospels show Jesus, time and time again, in this sense, '*re-membering*' the poor, the outcasts, the foreigner, the widow, ordinary people, bringing a wholeness into their lives by his care and acceptance.

We pray in the Lord's Prayer for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, where all will be re-membered, where forgiveness is to be found and God's grace is freely given.

We are all called to that better future, to build it together.

In our reading from the prophet Micah, we heard his vision of the world as it might be.

A vision that continues to capture the imagination, v3-4, *'they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.'*

Micah lived during a time characterised by the threat of war and the awful reality of warfare, when there was little defence against diseases, which from time to time afflicted his people, just like the world we live in today. Micah's vision is of a future when all nations seek God, and seek to live in God's way (they remember God's ways). v1-2, *'In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'*

When God is placed at the centre of our lives, this produces a revolution in human society, a real '*re-membering*'. A commentator writes, '*one of the reasons for the beauty of this passage is that it is totally out of harmony with the reality of our world, yet fully in harmony with what we would like the world to be*'. This comes about when people remember God, and God's ways.

Micah holds out hope that beyond the violent realities of his time, a better world was possible. This is not merely hoping for something that might one day come to pass.

It is a vision meant to inspire people now to act and work for a better world. Yet how much progress have we made? A challenge not just for Governments, but for us all. We all long for a better world, yet how much are we willing to live and work for one?

'A woman dreamt she walked into a brand new shop and to her surprise, found God behind the counter. 'What do you sell here?' she asked. 'Everything your heart desires', said God. Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human could wish for. 'I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear', she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, 'not just for me but for everyone on earth'. God smiled. 'I think that you've got me wrong, my dear. We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds.'

Like all good gardeners we have to learn to grow seeds into fruit in our lives and in our world. Our St Aidan's text a few years ago, was such fruit, of the Spirit, *'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'*

As Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'*. So, today we remember those who gave their lives seeking a better, more just, world, and we commit ourselves to pray and to seek, in God's strength, to make this vision a reality.