

SUNDAY 6TH JUNE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Thought for the week: "British Memorial of D-Day in Normandy, France: both to honour a memory and to hopefully inspire a new generation."



Today saw the unveiling of the British Memorial to those who lost their lives in Normandy on D-Day and the subsequent conflict in 1944. On the walls surrounding the bronze statue of three advancing infantry men are the names of twenty two thousand young men some as young as sixteen.



I think most people would agree it was a tremendous and tragic loss of life. And this does not take into account the loss of life of other nationalities, American, Canadian, Commonwealth, French civilian and German. So many families, so many stories. To see some of the veterans, now in their nineties, gathering at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire seventy-seven years on, frail but full of spirit, in order to remember their friends, their colleagues, was very moving.

So, what can we learn from the events of seventy-seven years ago? Is it just that we should look back with respect and a desire to honour the courage and price that was paid by so many of those who served?

For me, it is one of those classic "AND" situations, rather than "yes" or "no."

Looking backwards, it is vitally important that we never forget and learn the lessons that led to not just one, but two of the most painful and defining experiences humanity has known, the first and second world wars. Certainly, when I have talked to veterans in the past this has been one of the key things they have impressed upon me. "Do not glorify war, everyone is scared, and everyone loses something or someone," one veteran once said to me at a Remembrance Parade, and I have never forgotten it.

So, it is important that we look back and remember firstly, the people, and then secondly, the reasons, to make sure we don't end up making the same mistakes again.

But, from a biblical point of view, the past also often shapes the future.

The whole image and symbolism of the Exodus in Jewish thought would be a very clear example.

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus often looked back through their Scriptures and through their stories to when God raised up Moses to lead them out of Israel, into the desert, and eventually to cross the Jordan and so enter the Promised Land. In other words, a liberation from slavery and oppression to freedom and a new life in God. Even the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan was remembered, as were the highs and lows of faithfulness and the hardheartedness of the people during the desert wanderings.

This crossing point of the Jordan is also the traditional site where Elijah the great prophet is meant to have handed over his mantle and authority to Elisha (2Kings ch 2) and Elijah is then taken up into heaven, signalling a new chapter and new era.

No surprise then, that when Jesus came on the scene where did He go to find John the Baptist, to the very same place on the river Jordan, for it was there that John was calling people to “Make way for the coming of the new King!”

In other words, three ‘Exodus’s’ if you like, a physical one (Moses and Joshua), a spiritual one (Elijah and Elisha), and now an incarnational one (physical and spiritual wedded together in the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of His announcement that the Kingdom of heaven was coming to earth.

Three Exodus’s, each very different, and yet each connected with the other both looking back AND looking forward to the next. This seems to be the way God works according to His character.

Looking forward further in the scriptures we can see that New Testament writers such as Paul and John have taken these ‘Exodus’s’, learned from their cultural and religious history and chosen to do things differently, to do things the Jesus way, taking their faith and putting it into practice. Paul writes in Romans chapter 8 that life through the Spirit will lead us out of oppression “that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

The book of Revelation expands on this even further in chapters 21 and 22 by providing us with a vision of the future where history has come full circle and Creation is remade into a “New Heaven and a New Earth”, with Jesus as the Temple.

Taking this ‘biblical’ way of seeing into our thinking about not only the British Memorial but into what it represents, we can perhaps see how many of the veterans qualities, a commitment to a bigger vision and hope than simply themselves, a willingness to step out and stand by these hopes even if it meant leaving behind security and comfort and risking everything for the sake of putting hope into action, and to do so with dignity, and a good dose of humour and camaraderie, all these are lasting qualities that we are in such desperate need of in our world as we face the opportunity of seeking to build a new world after this pandemic.

The ‘enemy,’ in this sense is not another nation or state, faith or regime, this time the enemy is more insidious, more invisible. It lies in a desire simply to accept the world back as it has always been – the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer, the planet seen as an object for our exploitation when it was meant to be loved and cared for as our ‘common home,’ and a desire simply to seek our own ‘comfort,’ “as long as we get a holiday,” “as long we’re alright,” then we ignore the wider issues and stories that ring loud in heaven all around us.

It will take courage to reach out, to think and then stand for something different, to be willing to embrace change and to do so not sure if it will succeed but to try all the same. To live in this place is a ‘dangerous place,’ and uncertain and an uncomfortable place. But it is the



Qasr al-Yahud – the place where the Israelites crossed over to Israel with Joshua, and also the baptism site of John the Baptist.

place women, men and children of all faiths and none need to be if we are going to be willing to try and help a hope bigger than ourselves become a reality.

And, to us as Christians, we should not be surprised at this, it was after all the way of Jesus and the way of pretty much all of the disciples after Him who have contributed to the Kingdom down the ages – Wilberforce, Hannah Moore, Lord Shaftsbury, Martin Luther King etc.

It's always easier to go with the flow and accept the status quo, the inevitable. Much harder to step out with the voice of hope and the Kingdom in our hearts.

May be it would be good to remember those who then have done so in the past even if our challenge looks very different as we look to the future.

Matt Thomson



[Worship: Next Sunday – Sunday 13th June at 10.30am will be in Banwell – Sermon Series: Questions for today's Church?"](#)

Following the success of our first week on Sunday (6th June) in Congresbury, we will this week be looking at the question sent in “If Jesus could vote, who would He vote for and why?” So, we will be looking at the whole issue of Faith and Politics.

Thank you for sending these questions in and we would love to receive others. If you would like to ask a question you can do so either in writing, by email or the website, or by dropping in to either of the Churches or the Church Office.



[Something different for the Summer: “Talk on the Latest Research into the Turin Shroud, how it was formed and what it represents” – Tuesday 15th June at 7.30pm in Congresbury Church, also via Zoom and Livestreamed.](#)

You may have heard about the Turin Shroud and, like me, maybe dismissed it as either romantic legend or a medieval forgery (especially following the headlines of carbon dating from the 1980's). But much research and many advances have been made in science and technology since then leading to some, quite literally, incredible findings.

The forty minute talk will try and give an overview of some of these and also some of the implications and questions they then leave with us. The Shroud of Turin has always been highly controversial, but this talk will simply try and share some of the information and studies that have come forward and leave it up to each person to try and work out their response to it and as to what it means. The talk will then be followed by a Q&A session.

If you would like to join in you can do so either physically in Congresbury Church, or via Zoom (simply contact Georgina Walker or Kirsty Bowles by emailing kirsty.bowles@newcreationchurches.org.uk in order to get the link details, or the session will be Livestreamed over Facebook Live – as we have done with Sunday services).

Do you have a heart for pastoral care?

Have you got an hour a month to spare?

We are looking at expanding our pastoral care team after the lockdown restrictions ease. If you feel that you could spare a little time once a month to visit people in your parish for a chat and a catch up we would love to hear from you. If you feel you might be able to help be able to offer help or for more information help please leave your name and phone number on the office phone 01934 833126 or email

lisa.stannard@newcreationchurches.org.uk. Thank you.

New Creation
Building Better Community



**Do you enjoy gardening?
Do you have a spare hour or two to spare?
Then**



WE NEED YOU

The prayer garden and gardens around the refectory
Whether you want to take on a flower bed or just happy to do a bit of weeding, pruning or even painting of benches we really need you to join our small dedicated group of people who help to keep the church grounds looking Beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

For more information, please leave a message in the church office or on the answer machine for Rosemary and she will contact you with more details.



ARE THERE ANY GREEN-FINGERED FOLK IN BANWELL? GROUNDS AT ST. ANDREW'S, BANWELL ARE SMALLER BUT PROVIDE A BEAUTIFUL BACKDROP TO THE CHURCH AND ARE CERTAINLY ENJOYED BY THE VILLAGE AS A BEAUTIFUL SPOT FOR A LEISURELY STROLL.

IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED, PLEASE EMAIL KIRSTY
KIRSTY.BOWLES@NEWCREATIONCHURCHES.ORG.UK