

Texts: Isaiah 2:1-5 and 53:1-6

Sunday 10th November 2019

Brightons Parish Church

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

When you want to relax, or even distract yourself from the brokenness of our world, what would you turn to on TV? Do you have a favourite TV programme? Turn to your neighbour and share your favourite TV programme, for one minute, if you feel able.

(PAUSE)

I actually have quite a few favourites and one of them on Netflix is called “Salvation”. It is a kind of sci-fi, end of the world type programme, with lots of twists, plots and intrigues. I’ve been waiting for the third series to come out but only learnt this week that it has been shelved – gutting!

Throughout the first two series there were two very key ideas: that science could provide the answers to the problem they were facing in Salvation, but that their efforts were constantly being hindered by human selfishness.

These issues remind me of the early part of the 20th century, when most of the Western world thought that humanity was coming into a Golden Age. The belief was that through advances in technology, medicine and economics, a better future was ahead for the human race, and that science would help drive this development.

But the arrival and consequent devastation of both World Wars soon removed that hope. In fact, science was abused and facilitated the development of war, such that World War One was the first time that killing could be done place on an industrial scale...

The poet Wilfred Owen spoke of ‘these who die as cattle’. French troops at Verdun mutinied over the scale of the appalling losses they suffered and marched through the streets baaing like sheep in protest: they knew they were literally going like lambs to the slaughter.

Once again, human nature conspired to threaten humanity – yes, we are capable of achieving incredible beauty, creativity and goodness, but we are also constantly undermining ourselves through selfishness. And that selfishness is there in every one of us – in every relationship there can be both love and hurt, for no one is perfect.

It’s a conundrum that, to my mind, science doesn’t seem to have an answer for,...

but it's a reality that every worldview must engage with: whether you are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, agnostic or atheist, we all must face the question: why are we so broken and what can be done about it?

The Christian faith affirms our God-given potential, but it also honestly admits that we are all broken. Our second reading reminded us that we “all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way” (Isaiah 53:6) – we look after number one – and in the first reading, we were reminded that disputes, war and the means to kill one another, multiple times over, are present in our world.

And yet the Christian faith goes one step further – for it offers real, tangible hope – hope that is centred upon the person of Jesus Christ.

In no other religion, before or since the coming of Jesus, has there been the claim that the God of all creation has come down to experience for Himself our mess and brokenness. No other faith has had the nerve to claim that this very same God, has personally died to provide hope and a future for humanity. But as the prophet **Isaiah** foretold about Jesus:

**“Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.”**

(Isaiah 53:4-5)

These are the central claims of the Christian faith – that God so loved you and me that He came, and He died. And yet the Christian faith goes further – it claims that this God rose to life again, as proof that He has conquered the cause and consequence of our brokenness.

Friends, this might all sound fanciful to your ears, made up nonsense, but my own story is of a God who came alongside me and rescued me from my brokenness and selfishness. Now, I am by no means perfect, as I mentioned several times last week – but I am not the same person I was when I became a Christian at the age of nineteen. The living God, the God revealed in the Bible, has begun a work in me to change me from the inside out – it is not the result of being religious,...

or following a set of rules, but rather because I now know this God for myself and He is changing my heart. It is an offer, an invitation, He gives to each one of us.

So, this Remembrance Sunday, remember and honour those who served our country, whether they died on the battlefield or came home with even greater brokenness, like Fred.

Remember too, that the horror of war points to the brokenness of the entire human race, including ourselves.

But, remember, always remember, that there is a God who so loves our world, that He paid the ultimate sacrifice Himself – He was pierced for our brokenness,

and He willingly went through that so we could be made whole, so that we could know healing from our brokenness. He offers this to one and all, to you and me, but we must each choose to respond to His offer, for He is no dictator.

So, remember – remember those who served, remember our brokenness, but remember, always remember, that Jesus offers you healing for your brokenness, if you will only come in faith to Him. I pray it may it be so. Amen.