

St Nicholas Church
Sunday 9th November 2014
John 15: 1-16
War and Peace

John 15:1-16 Good News Translation (GNT): Jesus the Real Vine

15 "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. 3 You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. 4 Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. 6 Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. 8 My Father's glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples. 9 I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

11 "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. 13 The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. 14 And you are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name.

Message: War and Peace.....May the words of my mouth...

In March 2008, I was driving from Rochester in Kent, where my British Aerospace Engineers are located, and I was driving to Colchester – the home of 16 Air Assault Brigade and the Parachute Regiment. I was taking some navigation equipment with me for the troops to use in Afghanistan.....this was their first major deployment to Helmand Province in Afghanistan.....my Company, BAE Systems, had taken a contract from the Ministry of Defence that within 8 weeks we would deliver the military equivalent of the Tom Tom / Garmin navigation hand held devices.....the sort of software that most of you have on your I Phones today but with additional military mapping information.

It was a dark and wet night as I drove to Colchester..... My young companion was a very capable software and systems engineer.... And he was working his laptop.....we did not speak much on that journey..... But after a while I said what are you doing?.....he said he was testing the software.... I asked him why?.....it has passed all the Company's software tests...we had been testing the equipment for several weeks it was safe and reliable to use.....yes he said, that is true..... but I just want to make doubly sure that there are no software bugs.....good I said and I complimented him on his diligence.....

He continued testing...after a while I said, you know there is only a 1% chance that we may make any difference to the individual soldier coming home safely..... my young friend said yes..... but should we not do our absolute best to ensure that our 1% is as good as we can make it..... who was the wise one in our car I thought.....I went on driving..... he went on testing his software.

The next day my engineer and I trained about 20 of the Brigade's Pathfinder Platoon with this navigation equipment before they deployed to Helmand Province the following week.....

We had done our part in helping our troops, just like many British people in Industry have done over decades..... but it was a tough tour of duty for the Paras.....not all the 2000 service personnel that deployed in 16 AA Brigade came back in one piece and not all came back alive.....

*****Start Here - 453 men and women died in the Afghanistan war and several thousand still suffer terrible injuries, and of course this is why the poppy appeal is as important today as it has ever been.....**

War is 90% boredom and 10% hell we are all told when we join up in the services.....for some ex service men and women is it hell every day after the war.....and the poppy appeal ensures there is a safety net that such people get help when they need it.

Let's turn our thoughts to the First World War, when the war to end all wars was fought from 1914 to 1918.

And what a price was paid by so many that you will be reminded of when you have chance to step into the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle or to our local war memorials that you find in all cities, towns and villages throughout Scotland and the UK.

And we have our own war memorial at the back of this church where we will complete our service by remembering the people from the Ethicon Company who fell in the 2 World Wars.

But the war to end all wars resulted in an uneasy peace in Europe for just 20 years, and then in 1939 to 1945 people the world paid another enormous price for sin, for being unable to reconcile differences other than by turning to war to overcome tyranny.

Over 16,000 British service personnel have been killed in action since the Second World War with thousands more injured in mind, body, and soul - in countries as far apart as Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus, the Middle East, notably Iraq and Afghanistan, Malaysia, and Korea.

And in the Southern Hemisphere, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and the Falkland Islands are just some of the countries British people have lost their lives in the service of our country – **which is why so many of us support the Poppy Appeal and wear our poppies to remember them.**

Today we have our servicemen and women trying to train the Afghan Army, the Kurdish Army in Northern Iraq, and providing significant medical support in the face of the dreadful Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone and North West Africa – the work of our service personnel is never done.....and always they are confronted by danger, and we need us to support them with our prayers and resources, wherever they are.

((We all have memories of the dead and injured. And behind each name and photograph there is a mother, a father, a wife, a husband, a partner, children who are left with broken hearts and grief.)))

So let us once again resolve to honour the memory of all those who have died in war, not just today on Remembrance Sunday but every day, by valuing our freedom and looking after one another.....just as Jesus looks after each of us, if we let him.

Let us honour those who continue to suffer in mind, body, and soul by doing whatever we can to ensure that one day war will indeed be no more,

The absence of Allied Nations Land forces in Syria allowed the Islamic State to rise up and create murder on such a large scale in Syria and Iraq that no where is safe from such fanatical murderers..... and so the search for peace by world leaders continues.and in the meantime, Christians in particular have been persecuted, murdered and driven out of so many places in the Middle East.....

Enough about War, what about peace?

The first part of our reading is about the vine

“I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener is the illustration Jesus offers us today.....

4 Remain united to me, says Jesus, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

In other words scripture says...stay connected to Jesus and God.....be a Christian who is alive and ready to play your part in the local community in looking after one another, and building up a new Church of Scotland.....one that is in tune with local people and meets them in their needs.....

But what role do we have in such matters..... we are the silent majority that sets the values of this community in this part of the Edinburgh..... **But what can we do you say?**

But if we become a channel for God's peace,

**if we can bring love where there is hatred,
if we can bring hope where there's despair,
if we can bring light where there is darkness
and if we can bring joy where there is sadness
then we know we have followed Jesus' command:
to love one another as He loves us.**

In our bible reading, we have one of those most familiar lines in the Bible that will be quoted up and down the country in our churches in the UK today and in many parts of the world that have inspired so many.

. ¹³ The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them.” (John 15 v13)

Only Jesus said more than that, - as he instructed his disciples not long before he was arrested, tried, and crucified.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

And Jesus demonstrated that love throughout his arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection – his love for all shone through his ministry, which is why he inspired millions of people throughout the ages as a living God – not a dead God of past and distant history – but a living God – a God who you can speak to, sense the presence of, and listen to.

If we believe that the task of promoting peace and looking after the downtrodden is beyond us, then we should remember the 12 individuals and the group of women who decided to follow Jesus after he was risen from the tomb. They made a difference throughout the world, by trusting in God always and offering unconditional love.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross enables us to be at peace within ourselves and he offers us the opportunity of life after death, if we turn from sin and follow him.

And the sacrifice of all those people who laid down their lives for our freedom, shows that such sacrifices have not been in vain when we value our freedom and love one another. Many were God fearing men and women who responded to Holy Scriptures where it says:

My commandment is this said Jesus: love one another, just as I love you. ¹³ The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them.

Amen 1506 words (or 1137 words)

Let's reflect on God's Word by singing: When I survey the wondrous cross.....