**Remembrance Sunday.**

I wonder what you make of Remembrance Day-do the two World Wars seem so long ago?

Does it seem at all meaningful to continue a traditional service that is over 100 years old? For some it does convey something &, of course, there are still conflicts round the world in which the UK has been engaged with consequent losses & injuries. There is, surely, a place to commemorate, within a Christian context, the sacrifices of life made by so many for our country. It is right to thank God, corporately, for the heroic endurance of our armed services, voluntary organizations & civilians during the two World Wars & beyond. It is, also, right to ask for God’s help so that we do better at avoiding war & so that we can comfort to those who mourn the loss of loved ones & to those who suffer the after effects of conflict. Indeed, we may wonder aloud “-how did they cope then & now with the stress, cruelty & loss of war?”

Psalm 46 gives two pointers on how to cope. It encourages us, like the Israelites, to praise God for deliverance from a military crisis, as we & they follow His ways-He is described as the God of Jacob in v. 7. The times then & now were & are tough. Neither we nor they are promised an easy ride. Only His help to see us through the difficulties is promised. Two pictures are given to illustrate this challenging pointer.

Firstly, in v. 1 & 2 God is seen as a refuge, a place of safety in the following troubles of a terrifying earthquake with shaking mountains, overwhelming floods & violent storms. There should be no need to fear these various terrifying hazards. These can resonate with us today: Covid 19 is on the rampage; a fresh lockdown has started; great economic uncertainties threaten; “nations are in uproar” like the USA, the Middle East & “kingdoms may fall” (v 6); there is the sense that there seems no prospect of ever getting back to normal. Can we trust God so that we do not fear?

Secondly, v. 7 suggests that, as we trust God, we can be like a fortified city, defended against all these dangers by His presence (v.5). The river within the city of God (v. 4) will be a source of cleansing, refreshment & sustenance. It is like a river of God’s love flowing throughout the city. I wonder if this image can help us, whatever we face, to thank Him for His presence & previous deliverances, as we trust Him.

The other pointer contains the promise in v.9 v that He will bring peace-making “wars cease”, which is usually seen as a reference to the Second Coming, when God will judge in righteousness & put right all inequalities, wrongs & injustices. Though this looks forward to the future, Christians are urged to start peacemaking now.

How does this work for us individually, corporately & nationally? Verse 10 shows the way & the challenge “Be still & know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations.” Be still-how hard that is when our agitated minds are whirring away with schemes to avoid trouble with fears or with worries! We are urged, then, to “know God”-to draw close to him in a real way by faith & see His power, love & uprightness. He has promised to be “exalted among the nations”-to calm those in uproar, to rule over all in love-thus fulfilling the Lord’s Prayer that His “will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.”This should give us hope & courage & keep us from falling. As we look to Him the looming threats won’t be in our vision & we see His ways to reign in peace.

When we give thanks for the bravery & willingness to serve even to the point of death of those we commemorate today, we should recall that God was, for so many, like a refuge from or a fortified city against all threats, while they played their part in saving us in two World Wars & beyond. May we, as the writer says in Ps 85: 8, “listen to what God the Lord will say; He promises peace to His people-His saints, but let them not return to folly.”