

'Vigilance'

Matthew 25:1-13

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; power is ever stealing from the many to the few."
~ *Wendell Phillips*

"When good people in any country cease their vigilance and struggle, then evil men prevail."
~ *Pearl S Buck*

Questions for reflection

- On Remembrance Sunday we remember the cost of all conflicts and the sacrifices made. What happens if we forget?
- Service to our nation comes in many guises, and not only in war-time. On Remembrance Sunday who today serves our nation in this time of need?
- Peace is not only God's gift to us, but our gift to each other. Where does our world, our nation, and where do we as individuals need to give peace?

"The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war."
~ *Norman Schwarzkopf*

"You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist."
~ *Indira Gandhi*

Delay is difficult. Whether we are waiting for this time of health crisis to come to an end; whether we are waiting to find out what will, might, or might not, be able to do around Christmas next month; whether we are awaiting the results of a medical test, or an exam, or whether bulbs and trees we have planted will grow; or whether we await the result of the American presidential vote, delay is difficult; waiting is difficult.

We prize fast communication; smooth travel; promotion at work; food to be cooked. "Are we there yet" may be the forlorn cry of the child travelling in the back seat of a car, but adults and children alike wish for life on their own accelerated timetable.¹

During the dark days of both World Wars, or any conflict, the waiting must have been almost unbearable. When would a loved one return from the trenches, or from a convoy at sea, or a flying raid? Where and when would the bomb, audibly falling through the air, finally land and explode?

Remembrance Sunday, which has a joint focus on war, and its cost, and the peace that follows, and its cost, teaches us again that we need to learn and practice patience. It teaches us that in time of conflict, or uncertainty, or fear, or longing, we need to remain vigilant. We need to look to the future. We need to learn to live hopefully in a time of crisis.

The waiting need not be passive. As we wait, we still pray, and work, and edge, however slowly, forward. We still make efforts to maintain the things that matter most to us in our lives and in our communities and in our world. And we watch, we are vigilant. To combat any erosion of peace, or freedom, or justice, or equality, or generosity, or faith, or hope, or love.

If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and the more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war, then these times, this very moment, is when we need to be at work. We do not put this off. There is a timeliness in faith and love, as we wait for the promise of Jesus' return. Fill your lamps, and your lives, with hope, watch, wait, and get ready!

Amen

ⁱ Lindsay P Armstrong, Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol 3, p285