

# Rector's Letter – November 2018

Dear Friends,

On an autumn day in 1914 Laurence Binyon, then Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, composed a poem that Rudyard Kipling would one day praise as ‘the most beautiful expression of sorrow in the English language.’ Weeks after the outbreak of war, British casualties were mounting. Lists of the dead and wounded were appearing in British newspapers, hopes of a speedy end to war were fading fast. “For the Fallen,” as Binyon called his poem, was published in The Times on 21 September 1914. The fourth stanza is recited at Remembrance services:



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn;  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
We will remember them.*

This centenary year of the end of the First World War, at 11 a.m. on 11th November, there are a number of extra events to mark its significance. On Friday 9th and Saturday 10th November, the Saffron Walden Community Theatre are staging a show called ‘Lest we forget’ at the Baptist Church at 7.30 p.m. Following the evening service on Sunday 11th at 5.30 p.m. at St. Mary’s, Saffron Walden of words and music, there is to a gathering on the Common at 7 p.m. to enable the town to share in the national tribute, called ‘Battle’s over.’

The line ‘lest we forget’ is from the 12th verse of the 6th chapter of the Biblical book Deuteronomy and is quoted by Rudyard Kipling in his poem ‘Recessional.’ In contrasting the transient successes of nations with the constancy of God’s faithfulness in his poem, Kipling stays true to the sense of the line in its original context. God’s people, having been rescued from slavery in Egypt, are urged to remember what God has done for them. Their experience as victims of oppression is to be formative. Drawing upon this history, they are to care for those who are in desperate need, the widow, the orphan and the stranger in their midst. In their distinguishing caring for the vulnerable and poor, they are to be a ‘Light to the Nations.’

Jesus used this same designation of his followers when he called them the ‘Light of the World’ in his Sermon on the Mount. In these three chapters of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus explains how the Church is to model a particular way of life. He tells them ‘Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the Children of God’ and commands them to ‘love their enemies.’ Underpinning this teaching is the essential understanding that God’s love embraces every nation, every culture and every individual.

God’s love is fulfilled in God’s Kingdom and is pictured vividly in the final book of the Bible. The author glimpses into eternity and sees a multitude worshipping God that ‘no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages, standing before the throne...’ Inspired by this revelation, let us worship God and recommit ourselves to seek God’s Kingdom by striving for peace and justice, here and across God’s world.

With love

David Tomlinson

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