

RECTOR'S PINT

It is very tempting to withdraw into a bucolic bubble. Against the backdrop of another glorious English Spring, it is hard to conceive of the destruction, suffering, and pain, being meted out on cities and towns in Ukraine right now. Not only in Ukraine of course, how many of us have followed the terrible things that are ongoing in Yemen? And somehow the fallout from the withdrawal from Afghanistan seems to have slipped down the newsworthy ladder.

Nonetheless, it is Ukraine that dominates now and after only a few weeks of conflict we are hearing about shocking acts of brutality and depravity, such is the terrible nature of war.

So, it is tempting to turn away, and focus on the loveliness of an English village in spring. But I and others are, of course, wanting to do something practical. However, what might our Christian faith have to say in the face of yet another example of the human tendency to mess things up so badly?

My faith has, at its heart, an act of violence so shocking that as a form of execution it was eventually banned by the very people who invented it. There is no comfortable escapism to be found in crucifixion. What do I see going on? I see an event in which the full horror of human failing, of evil and violence, falls upon a wholly innocent victim. But I am, or I try to be, a Christian, and that means that I declare that the pain, and loss, and broken hope, that the Cross represents was not, and is not, the last word. We are in the Easter season, the season of Resurrection and I believe we need to declare loudly and boldly, in the face of all the terrible things that we as human beings are capable of, that God sees in us creatures who can be redeemed, and who are loved, and that brings us hope.

I find it very significant that Jesus himself is reported as declaring that we should not be at all surprised that the world is the way it is. He promised that we would continue to hear of wars and rumours of wars. Nonetheless, against that bleak assessment of our world, Jesus still called those who would listen to follow him, and continue to work and pray for a better way. I believe that we do that in the light of both his death which declares that he knew and experienced the very worst, and the Resurrection, which declares that hope will not die - and ultimately, we will experience the very best.

God of Love, God of Peace, this fractured word
Cries out in pain, burns deep into my soul,
And challenges me, to make a difference.

God of Love, God of Peace, God of this world,
Scarred by grief and tears, ignorance and fear,
Softens hearts of stone, and begins with mine

God of Love, God of Peace, create within me
A heart for people, a desire for change,
For new beginnings to start this day.

c) John Birch

Simon