

COMFORT

in

North Carrick

Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful
Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis
Sunday 16th August 2020

**From Rev Dr John Lochrie, Locum minister at Crosshill and
Maybole Parish Church**

On 6th August 1945 the first atomic bomb was dropped in anger on Hiroshima. Three days later the second destroyed Nagasaki. Shortly afterwards Japan finally surrendered and the Second World War was finally over. Since then there has been much debate over the morality of nuclear weapons.



Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but it can be dangerous when it leads to judgment of past actions on the basis of current knowledge. Total condemnation of the use of nuclear weapons to bring an end to the war can be easy for many today, but too often that ignores the situation facing the allied commanders in July 1945.

After VE Day the Japanese forces were gradually driven back to their home islands which they vowed to defend to the last man. Invasion would have resulted in great loss of life on both sides and, given the threat of a scorched earth policy, among the civilian population as well. Before making simplistic criticism the realities of the situation back then must be taken into account. Whatever we might think now, it is now a fact of history that the use of nuclear weapons ended the war much sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year of pandemic. The worldwide effects of Covid-19 are all too obvious. Recent events at home and abroad show that we are not out of the woods yet. Nevertheless, the spotlight of hindsight is being turned on the actions of governments all over the world.

Did China act quickly enough in the early days? Could more have been done to restrict the virus to Wuhan Province? Did this country lock down quickly enough? Did we do enough to protect the most vulnerable, especially in Care Homes? Should we as an island nation have done what New Zealand did and quarantine ourselves? Questions like these are being asked and answers demanded.

In the days and weeks and months ahead the debate will rage over what was done, what should not have been done and what could have been done. It is vital when we consider recent events that we keep in mind just how little was known about the virus in the early days. After all, however it came into being, it was new and unknown and one thing has become clear, it did not behave as other viruses had done. SARS simply died out as a threat. Covid-19 has not.



At times it may seem as if things will never improve. There is perhaps a lesson for us here from scripture. On many occasions in the Old Testament story it appeared that all was lost, yet out of every apparent disaster God brought a new beginning. In faith we have to hold fast to this belief. There will be a new normal, as different from the past as life after the flood was for Noah or life after the Exile was for Israel. We must never forget that the greatest new beginning came about when the Son God had sent was rejected and killed. Out of death on the cross came resurrection. Out of the pandemic will come a new way.

While enquiries will be needed to evaluate what has been done they must be fair to those faced with difficult and almost impossible decisions. It is every bit as important to learn the lessons from what has been done to shape the way ahead as it might be to seek to apportion blame.

Prayer for Jesus was as essential as breathing. It was his direct line of communication with his Father, a source of comfort as well as guidance.

He taught his apostles to be expectant and constant in prayer, to realise they were in touch with a loving and listening God, Father to all as well as to Jesus. The whole life of Jesus can be viewed as prayer as he tells us that his Father is the source of everything he did and said.



So time spent listening to God in prayer can influence all that we do. It can become within us a dialogue with God about our 24/7 life. On God's side, his willingness to listen and help us to understand, was and is always there. He waits patiently for us to hear him call but we can often get so immersed in other things, so busy that we forget the great source of inspiration within.

A very saintly man, John Vianney, who was born in 18th century France, compared God and the soul to two pieces of wax moulded into one by prayer of the heart, pieces which cannot be separated. He said that prayer enlarges the heart and that 'in a prayer well made, trouble vanishes like snow under the rays of the sun'. External situations may or may not change much but internally we have the peace, hope and patience which only God can give.

In our current situation with so much uncertainty due to the Covid virus, the warming of the earth's atmosphere and global economic instability, we Christians can resort to the power we have in prayer and learn to use it effectively.

St. Paul tells us that 'The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons but God's powerful weapons, which we use to destroy strongholds.' 2 Cor. 10: 4.

So armed, we can be confident that prayer which springs from a deep assurance that we are unconditionally loved by God, is effective no matter what difficulties we face. Churches of different denominations are uniting in prayer throughout the world. Remaining expectant and believing as we pray, and trying our best to follow the teaching of Jesus, we can face our fears for the future with hope in our hearts.

Ellen Hawkes

A THOUGHT FOR VJ DAY



Within the lovely landscape of South Ayrshire are many streams, rivers, waterfalls and lochs, which are prime locations for anglers, birdwatchers and tourists. One of these is Loch Bradan, not far from Straiton, which is also a reservoir, supplying households in Ayrshire, and more recently in Glasgow. Water is a lifegiving substance, necessary for our survival, but recent torrential rain has shown its enormous force to cause destruction.

In 1 Chronicles 11:17, we read that David, having been anointed King over Israel, was desperate for water to drink. 'If only I could have a drink of water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem!' At that time, David was at the cave of Adullam, with an army of Philistines (enemies) encamped in the Valley of Rephaim, and a garrison of them in Bethlehem itself. To obtain water from enemy-held territory would be no mean achievement.

Three of King David's "mighty men" - warrior chiefs or commanders - broke through the Philistine camp, and drew water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem. They brought the water back to David, no doubt certain that they had done their leader a massive favour. David refused to drink it. Instead, he 'poured it out to the Lord,' which, according to some, means he threw it away!

Had we witnessed this scene, we would have condemned King David's action as one of crass ingratitude. Three "mighty men" had risked life and limb to fetch the water and satisfy his thirst. With their mission safely accomplished, the King then changed his mind and threw the water away, even if he was apparently aware of the great personal risk required.

At this time, we mark the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, which effectively brought the Second World War to a close. With hostilities ceased in Europe, they now came to an end in the Asia-Pacific region, where bitter fighting had continued. On this 75th anniversary, we rightly remember those who, like King David's "mighty men", risked life and limb to bring us the privileges we enjoy today. We also rightly remember those who (military and civilian) paid the ultimate price, whose memory we treasure.

Perhaps we should also ask how well, or how badly, we have handled the peace won for us at great risk and personal cost.

Have we used our privileges properly? Or, like the ungrateful King, have we thrown them carelessly to the wind? As ! Peter 2:16 urges us: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." In a word: Christian freedom is always conditioned by Christian responsibility.

Rev. W. Gerald Jones