

Hopeful

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Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be like him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom
where he is alive and reigns with you.

Our text may be found in Psalm, 16 and verse 9: 'rest in hope.'

Next week, the Christian Year ends with a Sunday dedicated appropriately enough to Christ the King. The month of November with its emphasis on remembering – All Saints, All Souls, Remembrance Sunday – rightly remembers that ultimately God is Lord of all and that one day, his Son, Jesus Christ will come again in glory to judge both the quick and the dead. But, this morning, I'd like us to focus our remembering on the simple optimistic fact that, as Christians, we have hope; as Christians, we can all be hopeful.

Why? Why can we be positively hopeful?

Well our four readings this morning – Old Testament, Psalm, Epistle and Gospel – all point to why we do have hope and can be hopeful.

First, the gospel according to Mark: Jerusalem, shortly before Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. One of the disciples is well impressed by the size of the Temple buildings but Jesus points out that all will be destroyed and not a stone will be left standing. Doesn't sound very hopeful, does it? And Jesus goes on to tell Peter, James, John and Andrew of the End Times, of wars, of rumours of wars, of earthquakes and famines. Again, not much joy there, except implicit in the final phrase '**the beginning of the birth pangs**' (Mk13 v8) is a sign of the age to come, the Golden Age that the Jews look forward to, the age when the Kingdom of God is established on earth, where peace and justice will last forever.

The Old Testament passage, from the prophet Daniel, seems equally gloomy with '**a time of anguish**' (Dan 12 v1) predicted. But not to worry for the Archangel Michael, chief of the heavenly host, and a great favourite here on the Brittany–Normandy border will be the people's protector. And the passage contains one of the few Old Testament references to life after death, the resurrection, in the encouraging and hopeful phrase '**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake**' (12 v2).

Then, to the Psalm from which our text, '**rest in hope**', comes. Again, there is a sense that God is our refuge and protection. In him, we can take delight and put our trust. God teaches us how to live the good life and we can feel his presence with us. And the Psalm ends on a similar optimistic note with the promise of

eternal life: that God will not abandon us to the darkness of death but on the contrary, we will be shown 'the path of life' (16 v11).

Lastly, we come to the Epistle to Hebrews, a difficult, dense passage but again evidence of why we should be hopeful. Here the writer to the Hebrews tells us that Christ takes away our sin by his one act of sacrifice, his death on the cross. Thereafter, he is sat at God's right hand, awaiting the time when he will come again. But for now for us in the present, it is down to us to remain hopeful, to encourage each other in love and good deeds and to meet together for worship, praise and prayer.

So if November is a month for remembering, let us simply remember this: as Christians, we have ever reason to be hopeful.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 32 : Hopeful

