

Lectionary passages:-

Psalm 78 v1-7;

Amos 5 v18-24 ;

I Thessalonians 4 v13-18;

Matthew 25 v1-13

Today is the Sunday the Church and Nation remember the dead from a century of world conflicts. Yet our passages in the Lectionary are very much centred on the future. They remind us of the need to be ready for the appearance of Jesus amongst us.

War cuts lives short, it takes away time to make wise choices. As I remember those who died for our freedom I recognise the fragility of life and the need to use wisely the time and talents that I/we have been given. I appreciate what God is about and to seek to live a life worthy of the sacrifice of others, especially of the sacrifice of Jesus on a cross for my sin.

Thessalonians goes into detail. Details we do not read often enough...

1. Paul says he want the readers to be aware of what happens to those who die (fall asleep) before the return of Jesus. To give us hope and help us in our times of grief.
2. We believe Jesus has died and rose from the dead, he will bring with him the souls of those who have died (fallen asleep) as Christians. I think the phrase fallen asleep helps us as we recognise death really has lost its sting, if we "die" as a Christian we fall asleep and are to be woken at the return. i.e. the end of the age.
3. Paul goes on to talk about those who are alive at the end of the age, these will be joined with those who have fallen asleep! Quite a spectacle, quite an event!
4. The Lord will come to earth with a loud command, he will not be missed. It is a lesson to those who say Jesus has already returned, or those cults who claim to be living with the Messiah. No! When Jesus comes back all will see and hear!
5. Paul says we must encourage each other with words, that the dead in Christ will rise and those who are still alive as Christians will join them in the air with Jesus.
6. So it is useful to have Matthew 25 v1-13-the Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids as a lesson to us, some call it the wise and foolish girls. Five are not ready when

the bridegroom arrives. As guests do not know the time he will arrive then they must remain ready, alert and able to fulfil their duties.

7. Jesus and the Apostle ask us: Are we ready for the return of Jesus? Do we hold the things of this world loosely? Are we prepared to leave all behind at a moment's notice to go take up our place in heaven? Do we have a daily active relationship with Jesus that guarantees our future? The foolish unprepared bridesmaids have the shock and indignity of seeing the doors of the wedding venue shut and they are excluded. Jesus warns this could happen to us if we are "foolish", unprepared and unbelieving! The fact that it is Jesus who says this should especially make us think seriously about the parable and our faith.