

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Worship at Home: Sunday 12th September 2021

This service was prepared by Graham Hepburn.

Welcome and Preparation

This week marked the twentieth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the USA on 9/11/2001. I was planned to preach on the following Sunday, 16 September 2001, and, given the significance of the event, I have decided to include an abridged version of that service in this sheet. I will be preaching an updated edition of this sermon, at Canada Common this weekend, following my personal reflection on the questions in reflection 1, twenty years on from 9/11/2001, and from this service.

Reflection (1) Questions from Sept 2021.

- 1) **As you share in the service below, reflect on your memories of 9/11/2001, the way that world leaders and peoples have reacted since, right up to the most recent events in Afghanistan in August 2021.**
- 2) **Has there been a more significant world event in the past twenty years since 2000 that 9/11/2001? If so, what do you think it was?**
- 3) **How have we come to terms with such cataclysmic events, and the suffering of so many people, both individually and as a society?**
- 4) **How do you manage to avoid feeling the need for retaliation after such an event? Do you feel that world leaders have managed to achieve this, in this case, or in other cases that you can think of?**
- 5) **What injustice should we be standing up against, and what justice should we standing up for, as our tribute to the victims of 9/11/2001?**

Listen, read, pray or sing along

O Go our help in ages past (StF 132),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsARaTv7B3U>

O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.
Be Thou our guard while life shall last
And our eternal home. Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Prayer of praise and adoration

(All prayers in this service are from 'Seeing Christ in others', ed. by Geoffrey Duncan, Canterbury Press)

Creating Word, Living Word

Creating Word, bringing the world into being,
for the starred sky and the songbird that tell of
your being, for peoples diverse in colour and
culture, made in your image, speaking in many
tongues - we praise you.

**Help us to see you at work in the world;
May our lives tell the Good News.**

Living Word,
seen and heard in Jesus, teacher and storyteller,
speaking words of healing and forgiveness,
standing silent in the face of hatred and lies,
crying out on the cross - we believe in you.

**Help us to hear the cries of the world today;
May our lives tell the Good News.**

Breath of the Spirit,
rushing wind and still small voice,
challenging, changing, making connections,
creating community, encouraging hope,
come among us, inspire us - we need you.

**Help us to communicate your love;
May our lives tell the Good News.** *Jan Sutch Pickard*

In Prayer

In prayer I feel so small, a speck of dust
and you, Lord of the Universe,
stretched out beyond me and underneath,
a reality so firm and huge.

In prayer I feel in a place hidden but nevertheless
part of things, watching your love unfold,
colouring the landscape.

In prayer I see the hands of Christ reach over
and out to the world and hold the pieces together,
and I am there, somewhere. *Valerie Shedden*

Bible Readings:

Read Romans 8 v 26-39 Read Luke 23 v 26-34

Reflection (2) Sermon from 16 Sept 2001.

We have been reacting since two o'clock pm on Tuesday, UK time, nine o'clock am Eastern Standard time in New York City, to that terrible act of terrorism which brought the twin towers of the World Trade Center down, as if they had been built from matchsticks. I would be failing in my calling as a preacher, if I did not try as best I can to respond to those events this morning.

Last October (2000), my family visited New York on holiday and the trip to the top of The World Trade Center was one of our favourite parts. The lift ride up the hundred and ten floors was very fast, taking less than a minute. The views from the enclosed gallery at the top were spectacular. Then it was just a short escalator ride up to the top floor, to the outdoor viewing gallery and to the breathtaking views out over New York City. It really is beyond belief that the building should collapse so quickly; that so many people working in their offices, or working there to serve tourists such as me, should no longer be with us - all because of such an evil act perpetrated by people whose ideology is governed by leaders thousands of miles away.

The fact that we visited the building within the last year has brought both the event and the suffering of the people involved even closer; suffering on a scale that we can scarcely imagine. There have been floods or earthquakes, so called natural disasters, in other parts of the world but in such an

advanced country, this level of suffering can only be imagined, as a result of an act of terrorism.

So what is our response as a Christian people? We need to put our feelings as Christians into the context of our faith in Jesus Christ.

This week, I looked again at an article which was published in January 1998, 'A Preacher's Reaction, Reflection and Response to Major Incidents,' by Gordon Wilson; that is the Reverend Gordon Wilson, from Bristol (not Gordon Wilson from Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, whose daughter was killed in the Enniskillen bomb in 1987). The article strongly makes the point that first of all the preacher must come to terms with their own reaction, for only then, can the preacher respond to the needs of others in the congregation.

I watched the pictures in stunned disbelief on Tuesday night. It was Thursday when the pictures moved me to grief; forty-eight hours just to begin to come to terms with these events.

One way for us to continue to come to terms with tragedies is in quiet reflection. It is impossible to think about the needs of all those thousands of people and their thousands of families. I find it easier, more real, to think about individuals. For example, to think of Ted Olson, the American Solicitor General, whose wife, Barbara Olson, a CNN journalist, was on one of the planes. She was not meant to be on that plane. She had moved her schedule forward one day so that she would be at home with her husband to share his birthday. On the plane, she locked herself in the toilet and was on the phone to her husband until shortly before the plane crashed and she died. Whether they were well known people like the Olson family, or the thousands of ordinary people, each has been affected in the same way. Their family's lives changed forever because of the evil in this world.

This is a time for us to look for reassurance and affirmation. It is a time for finding strength from familiar routines and familiar words. Which is why our two lessons today were those two great passages, and our hymns are all well known.

The story of the Passion of Jesus Christ is very personal. A man, the Son of God, is arrested, tried on trumped up charges, tortured, humiliated, then

subjected to death by as cruel a method as humankind has ever devised. Yet, in the face of all that, this man is able to find the words, 'Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.' Whatever we feel as people about any act of terrorism, or any tragedy that is caused by humankind, then surely as Christians, this is the place from where we must start.

Starting from this point, then we must do certain things.

The crucifixion was a massive injustice. We must stand up against anything that we see as an injustice - such as the murdering of a thousand innocent people.

We must avoid retaliation. It is quite right that all governments, including ours, should support action against those who have been responsible. All efforts, using all resources at our disposal, should be used to bring the perpetrators of these acts to justice. But not at the expense of those who are not responsible; not innocent people who happen to live in Afghanistan, or Pakistan, or another country; people who, like the New Yorkers were, or are, just going about the business of their own family life.

During the past week, on the news we have been shown scenes of people in parts of the Middle East applauding this terrible act of terrorism because of their view that America supports their enemy, Israel. It was therefore good that the Palestinian leaders very quickly came out to offer their support, in words and deeds, to those affected by the bombings in the USA, We must do all we can to avoid retaliation.

We must stand up for justice as we stand up against injustice. The bringing to justice of those who are responsible for terrorist acts is consistent with the theme of justice that runs throughout the Old Testament. It is also consistent with these words of Jesus. One way of bringing people to face up to their actions concerns forgiveness but forgiveness involves repentance - even if the people who have been hurt have managed to find it in their hearts to forgive those who have hurt them.

As humans, we must do something to mark the event, some act of remembrance, some symbolic act - as we did on Friday, when we observed the three minute silence. Human beings are remarkably resilient. We need only to see the courage of the rescue services in New York this week to see the strength that there is within each human being. Somehow, we always, always, find the strength to be able to carry on; through the strength of our friends who support us, through the prayers of those who may not even know our individual needs but are willing to pray for us; through individual acts of kindness and people being able to go the extra mile without having to be asked. But in a case like this, an event so bad, it is beyond our imagining, we need something extra. No doubt in time, some appropriate act of remembrance for those involved will be devised.

One reason we are resilient is because of the strength we can draw from words like Paul's words to the church in Rome. Like Jesus, Paul knew what it was to suffer for what he believed in. These words remind us, that there is nothing, which can separate us from the love of God which we see in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote these words two thousand years ago. These words have strengthened millions of people through natural and human created disasters since then. We can say that if Paul were here today, witnessing the events of the last week, then he would be saying something along the lines of 'Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall terrorism, or cancer, or HIV, or unemployment, or world debt, or homelessness, or the selfishness of others, or national or domestic tragedies? No, in all of these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that, neither death nor life, neither the powers of this world, or the powers of the next world, neither the events that we fear today or the things we are fearful of for tomorrow, nor any forces of governments or of terrorists, neither above us or below us, nor anything else which we know of, or which in our worst moments we can possibly imagine, will be able to separate us from the love of God that we see in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. If God is on our side, the who can stand against us. And win?'

Read, pray or sing along (*This hymn was written within 24 hours of the events on 9/11/2001*)
(Tune, Amazing Grace, StF 440)

God's on our side and God will grieve
at carnage, loss and death;
for Jesus wept, and we will weep
with every grieving breath.

God's on their side, the enemy,
the ones we would despise;
God quench our vengeance, still our pride,
don't let our anger rise.

God's on each side, God loves us all,
and through our hurt and pain
God shares the anguish, nail scarred hands
reach out - love must remain.

God show us how to reconcile
each difference and for,
that we might learn to love again
and dry the other's tear.

Andrew Pratt, c 2001 Stainer and Bell

Prayers of Intercession.

Don't Hide

don't hide: don't run, but rather
discover in the midst of fragmentation
a new way forward; a different kind of journey
marked by its fragility, uncertainty
and lack of definition.

And on that path to hold these hands
that even in their brokenness
create a new tomorrow.

To dance at the margins,
and to see the face of Christ
where hurt is real and pain a way of life.
To be touched in the eye of the storm,
aware that tomorrow may not bring peace.
Impossible, you say; let me retreat
and find my rest.

What rest, my friend, in these fragmented times?

Peter Millar

Prayer for Peace

Show us, good Lord,
the peace we should seek,
the peace we must give,
the peace we can keep,
the peace we must forgo,
and the peace you have given in Jesus our Lord
and in reconciling man to man and man to God.

Help us, as individuals or together, to work, in
love, for peace, and never to lose heart.

We commit ourselves to each other

- in joy and sorrow;

We commit ourselves to all who share in the work
of reconciliation

- to support and stand by them.

We commit ourselves to the way of peace

- in thought and deed.

We commit ourselves to you

- as our friend and brother. **Amen** *Author unknown*

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

*If you give your weekly offering through an envelope
scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with
those who give using Standing orders.*

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them
our lives, to be used in mission and service
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Immortal, invisible, God only wise (StF 55)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spE-BE23qxA>

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rules in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and
love.

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render; oh, help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824-1908

Blessing

**May the blessing of God,
the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
be with you now and always Amen.**

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