

Psalm 70 (Part 1)

There is an old saying that there are no atheists in foxholes. When I thought about this I wondered if it was also true for those in air raid shelters, or what about war correspondents, or what about us who are just viewers or readers? Does our distance from the conflict make a difference to our believing in God? I think the answer to this question is mainly yes because being distanced from the sights, sounds and smells of conflict, of feeling the concussive effect of shellshock, of seeing friends die, of smelling the acrid aromas of burnt and broken bodies, it means that we are unaffected by them. However, though I have read and seen many accounts of the above and I was moved by them, it wasn't until my dad began to tell me something of his wartime experience, did they then begin to feel far more real. But, due to how old my dad was when I was born, I had to wait until I was in my 40's and dad was in his 80's for me to be old enough to understand and appreciate his experience.

Are you old enough for this Psalm? Are you old enough to understand and feel the disorientation, or lament, this Psalm speaks of? Are you old enough to know the pain, or distress of a soldier like David? I know I don't, and I can only guess at the disorientation, or lament, experienced by those whose names will be read out today at the war memorial as I have the joy of a long marriage which has been denied to them, I have seen my children grow up, which they have not and I've known the joy of seeing and holding grandchildren. Today then is about our choosing to honour and treasuring their memory and sacrifice as I was fortunate to have my dad come back from his war service and hear the story of his meeting the woman who became my mum and all that I received from them as my parents.

Psalm 70 (Part 2)

Let me tell you another old saying and this one Jesus said, 'I am with you always to end of age.' This Psalm knows how strange and odd disorientation looks like and feels like, but it is while he feels so does David remember God's salvation. He remembers the old, old stories of the Exodus, of Joshua, Gideon and Samson and how God brought relief, hope and rescue through them to Israel. But this remembering is not merely a history lesson of when David thinks of a time when God acted in the past. Instead, David remembers when God has acted in his life and through him and so he prays for God to save him again, that he may once again know his saving love.

When David thought of God saving him, he was also was thinking about God saving Israel too and today is a day when we think on and about the reality of the present international conflict. The headlines this week have included the possibility of our Remembrance Day being disrupted by protests about what is happening in Gaza. In one sense this is what Remembrance Day is about, it is about our being disorientated not only by the experience of past conflict but also by those whose lives today are being impacted by war and their cries for us to respond on their behalf. Remembrance Day is a good day to be disorientated in heart, mind and soul as Remembrance Day is then doing what it is meant to do and as much Last Post is followed by Reveille, so may we bring the hope of Jesus to all by our actions and our prayers.