

Advent 3 Year C 2021    **Zeph 3:14-20**, Phil 4:4-7, **Luke 3:7-18**    **Scott Malcolm**

Some of you may be old enough and have good enough memories to remember the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945. VE day, which commemorates the day World War 2 ended in Europe. As with Armistice Day, it is a very significant historical moment in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and it celebrates the end of a horrifying 6 years of war.

It is very hard for any of us who have never lived through such an experience to grasp the momentous emotional and spiritual release, that this day had for so many people. As a young person growing up in 1960's Whangarei, my Grandmother would always say how lucky we were not to have experienced those war years, and that we should always be grateful. My Grandfather volunteered, went away in 1940 and never came home until the end of 1946.

It is no wonder then, that celebrations were extensive.

"On VE Day weeks of official preparation rolled into action. Citizens were woken by bells and sirens, and flags quickly appeared. The pubs were full and there was singing and dancing in the streets and strangers kissing. People joined together in crocodile lines and took part in impromptu street theatre. But it never got out of hand."\*

The long, long fight was over, and it was time to rest. War, when it comes to an end, is worthy of much celebration.

Now our fight against Covid isn't over, and it might be a stretch to say it's like fighting a huge world-wide war. And perhaps it isn't even a time for resting ... but it does seem like today is a bit of a victory.

After 109 days locked down, we are back in church, albeit with some significant restrictions. Yet here we are and it's good to be meeting together again. It's good to see one another, to see smiles and new haircuts, to be in one another's presence, to hear one another's voices. To be in the company and love of friends once more. To be here in our physical home, where we are as a collected body, the congregation of St Barnabas Anglican church in Mt Eden. To see our beautiful stained-glass windows and dark timbered roof, to sense the spirit of prayer and joy that permeates this space, to smell the furniture polish and the slight tinge of building age, as we gather.

It is good to be home.

It's good to be back.

To be here this morning does feel like a victory. And perhaps we could ... rest awhile.

In our first testament reading, from the small prophetic book of Zephaniah this is what we have. A celebration that war has come to an end. In the first 3 ½ chapters of the book, "The Day of the Lord" has come, and God has waged war on God's people.

It has been a terrible conflict, but now, the long, long fight is over, and it is time to rest.

Time for celebration, time for shouting and singing, time for joy and rejoicing.

It's time to be brought home.

**Isn't that just a little bit ... like today?**

In our gospel we also hear the proclamation of John the Baptist, and John too points to a victory day. "To one who is coming, and he proclaimed good news to the people."

On this victory day, the coming one, is our Saviour Jesus Christ. In whose birth we find our home. In whose birth we find that all wars are over.

Hearing these Advent prophets and responding calls to celebration, shouting and singing, times for joy and rejoicing,

a time to be brought home ... we can be forgiven for thinking, believing ... and comparing ....

**For ... Isn't it all ... a little bit like today?**

Our epistle reading may sum up our feelings for this morning especially well. That today we rejoice in the Lord, always. That today, we, in the presence of what we still face, do that rejoicing wholeheartedly, but with gentleness to everyone ... irrespective of vaccination status.

That today, ... the Lord is nearer than he was yesterday, or last week.

That today ... In spite of all we face, we are not to worry, but pray. Pray with gratitude and thanksgiving for everything ... and God's peace which passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ ... whose advent we look forward to.

**For isn't all this ...**

**... a little bit like today?**

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

- NZ History Website