

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2018



New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



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Forgiveness in the gospels **AMY BOUCHER PYE**

Christmas with Luke **DAVID WINTER**

New Daylight

Edited by **Sally Welch**

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Amy Boucher Pye is the author of *The Living Cross: Exploring God's gift of forgiveness and new life* (BRF, 2016) and the award-winning *Finding Myself in Britain* (Authentic Media, 2015). She enjoys running the *Woman Alive* book club and speaking at churches. She blogs at amyboucherpye.com.

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Stephen Rand is an activist, a writer and a speaker who worked with Tearfund and Open Doors, travelling widely. He is now responsible for the public communications of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief.

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Sally Welch writes...

As we enter autumn and winter it is tempting to become mournful, sighing for the relaxed greenness of summer months, looking back to the vivid hope of spring. Such reflections can be useful, in that it is in pondering that we learn 'emotion recollected in tranquillity', as Wordsworth describes it. Indeed, one of the key characteristics of Mary, whose nature is explored by Penelope Wilcock in this issue, is the way she holds the events of Jesus' life in her heart and ponders them. Joshua too makes remembering an important part of his leadership, and Fiona Stratta shows Joshua's skill in encouraging the children of Israel to recall God's goodness to them in the past in order to inspire them to live well and faithfully into the future. Nick Read explores the challenging book of Leviticus, with its seemingly endless descriptions of the best way to sacrifice an animal, and shows how adherence to the covenant which God made with this people is both honoured and replaced by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He demonstrates how a willingness to grapple with Leviticus will help Christians understand the context in which Christ lived and the eternal truths which he brought to fruition.

However, to dwell too long amid memories can sap one's energies for engaging with the present and looking to the future, preventing new growth and progress. Amy Boucher Pye shows us how accepting the forgiveness of Christ for ourselves is as necessary for living fully in Christ as engaging with the challenging task of forgiving others.

This process of forgiveness is just as important in public life as in the domestic sphere. As the nations of the world unite in remembering and mourning the loss of so many lives in the tragedy of World War I at the centenary of its ending, we join our prayers with those of Christians throughout the world as we pledge to work for peace on a worldwide scale. The scarlet poppy, a powerful symbol of blood spilt, is also a sign of new growth and hope for the future: 'To you from failing hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high' ('In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae).

As we journey through the autumn and winter months I pray that we may grow in the understanding and love from which spring the shoots of forgiveness.

Sally Welch

Exploring war and peace

One of the most memorable services I ever took was when I worked as a civilian chaplain to an army regiment in the south of England. As part of my duties I had accompanied a group of young soldiers on a tour of the battlefields of northern France. On the last day of our trip, I led a service of remembrance at Tyne Cot Cemetery, in front of the memorial which stands over lines of white crosses stretching as far as the eye can see. The memorial itself, majestic and solemn, bears the names of 35,000 officers and soldiers whose lives were lost in Belgium between 1914 and 1917, and whose remains could not be found. That's 35,000 sons, husbands and lovers whose loved ones were never able to visit a grave because the scale of the fighting was so great and its nature so horrific that their bodies could not be recovered. That's a very hard fact. Later, I asked one of the soldiers what they had thought of the tour and he replied, 'Well, it's all graveyards, isn't it?' And to some extent he was right. It is very difficult when touring the battlefields of the Somme to rise above the grim weight of statistics – those killed, those injured, the amount of land gained for each life lost. When you add to this the numbers of those killed or wounded in World War II and in subsequent wars, it becomes almost overpowering. Every year since 1939, young men and women, with their whole futures before them, have died in service of their country.

On this centenary of the end of the 'war to end all wars', we find ourselves looking back in sorrow to the carnage of past conflicts, even while we are contemplating new dangers – new types of hidden warfare, such as terrorism – as well as the traditional ones we are all too aware of and fear so much. In the following two weeks, we will look to the Bible to help us understand how we can draw meaning from this and what lessons we can learn while we work for the 'peaceable kingdom', which is God's.

SALLY WELCH

Miserable slaughter

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.’

At the end of August 2017 I went to France with my two youngest children, touring the museums and battlefields of World War I. One particularly poignant memorial is a large statue of a dragon, standing at the top of a hill, looking across only about half a mile to Mametz Wood. It marks the spot where the 38th (Welsh) division set off to take Mametz Wood on 7 July 1916 and suffered heavy losses. The wood was cleared of enemies by 14 July but at a cost of over 4,000 casualties. Even 100 years on, to stand where so many people fought and suffered is a very powerful experience. We stood where thousands of people had died just to gain a few hundred yards of land; we stood on green grass where once there had been thick mud, and we wondered at the immensity of the sacrifice that was made.

The story of Herod’s vicious slaughter of babies and young children is brutal and shocking. This short, stark chapter in the life of Christ, coming so soon after choirs of angels and rejoicing, is a bleak reminder that Jesus came into a world of brokenness and sin. Yet the very fact of his birth is the sign of hope which had been sought for all the ages – a breaking-in of light and love to the darkness of evil and despair.

As we stand with the peoples of many nations today and remember the end of a fearful conflict that threatened to engulf the world, we lament with Rachel at the loss of life and ponder with Mary the arrival of the light.

*‘At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them’
('For the Fallen,' Robert Laurence Binyon, 1914).*

SALLY WELCH

The challenge of remembering

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds.

Remembering is not always easy. It is not always something we want to do. Those who have never known combat may not want to make the effort to imagine what it may have been like, or to be grateful to those who did engage in it. Those who have lived through war may not want to be reminded of that experience. As a priest, I have had the privilege of listening to people's memories of their own lives and those of their loved ones. During this time I have heard quite a few anecdotes of wartime. People have talked about the different officers they knew and what they thought of them, or about the food that they had to eat and how it was different from that of the Americans. Many, however, found it hard to talk about the details of what actually happened, the real costs: how their comrades died; how their parents, brothers, sisters and friends paid the price of war; and how their own minds and hearts were affected and never again quite the same.

But remembering is important. If we erase the past from our minds, both its successes and its failures, we have no hope of learning from it and, by so doing, building a better future. Psalm 77 explores the use of memory not only as a way of yearning for that which is past and will not return, but also as a source of hope, in that the remembrance of former happiness and contentment can lead to prayers that such times will occur once more. As Christians we can find comfort for the dark times, as we remember instances of God's help in the past, and reassurance in the goodness of his purposes for us. We also find the will to work in partnership with God for a future where warfare is no longer necessary, and peace triumphs over all.

Thank God for times of joy and laughter, which bring us hope and comfort when times are hard.

SALLY WELCH

Honouring the dead

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

Matthew's story of the salvation of the world begins with the recitation of the names of all those people who made such salvation possible – the ancestors of Christ. With the birth of Jesus, the messianic promise of the one who will redeem the fall is fulfilled – the one the world has been waiting for, the one standing on the shoulders of the generations to rescue us from the sin of Adam and restore God's original plan for his creation.

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is dedicated to the memory of Canadian Expeditionary Force members killed during World War I. It also serves as the place of commemoration for Canadian soldiers killed, or presumed dead, during that war who have no known grave. In all, 11,169 men are remembered. Jane Urquhart's novel *The Stone Carvers* tells of the building of this memorial and relates the poignancy of its construction as the names of the dead are carved into it, names which correspond to 'a cherished, remembered sound called over fields at summer dusk from a back porch door, shouted perhaps in anger or whispered in passion, or in prayer, in the winter dark. All that remained of torn faces, crushed bone, scattered limbs.'

In naming the forebears of Christ, Matthew gives context and meaning to all that has gone before. So too in calling out the names of those who died to bring peace do we honour their efforts and promise to build a better future.

Find your local war memorial and pray for the families whose names are represented on it. 'They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old'
(*'For the Fallen'*; Robert Laurence Binyon, 1914).

SALLY WELCH

A terrible price

But I, O Lord, cry out to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me? Wretched and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am desperate. Your wrath has swept over me; your dread assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; from all sides they close in on me. You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me; my companions are in darkness.

In this anniversary year, we have been reminded again of the horrors, the cruelty, the sheer waste of lives expended to gain a few yards of muddy, blood-soaked land. The true cost of war has been made plain to us again and again. And yet we are still paying this price!

The son of a friend of mine is a Royal Navy Marine, and terribly proud of himself. He has learned to drive everything with wheels, from a motor-bike to a tank. He can jump out of aeroplanes and dive underwater. But the Navy is also teaching him Arabic, with its possibilities of postings to potentially unstable countries. He has bought his mother a T-shirt that reads: ‘You think Marines are tough? Try being the mother of a Marine.’

The words of the psalmist help us to be aware of the cost of war, its horrors, and the fact that the consequences do not end with the end of hostilities but continue to cast a shadow in the lives of thousands of men and women. War is not to be entered into lightly or carelessly, but the battle is still being fought against terrorism, against injustice, and against the bullies, great and small, who try to force others to obey their will, however cruel that will might be. Even in a situation where conflict is inevitable, where in order to preserve the greater good we must fight for it, we must continue to work for peace.

Heavenly Father, help us to work for good in whatever situation we find ourselves, trusting in Christ's promise to do the same.

SALLY WELCH

The impact of war

O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people!... Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the animals have fled and are gone.

Some time ago, I visited Arromanches, site of the D-Day landings in 1944, and stood with a group of Royal Engineers on a cliff looking out over the Mulberry harbour, a triumph of wartime engineering. The soldiers had just seen a film of the landings, with all their accompanying chaos and horror, and the two-minute silence held afterwards was in sharp contrast to this. We looked out beyond the memorial to the calm sea, and nothing could be heard except for the skylarks above our heads.

What made the event so poignant was that these soldiers were themselves preparing to go to a conflict zone. This time the country was Afghanistan, but the same possible fate awaited them. My own youngest son was ten days old at the time, and I saw in front of me more young men, sons of mothers just like me. It was an unutterably moving moment, one that brought clearly to life the huge tragedy of war, and its immeasurable impact on those whose lives are drawn into its grip.

Jeremiah the prophet is working overtime to warn his people of the terrible dangers that they face in their faithlessness. The destruction of Jerusalem is prophesied, and his grief is for the punishment the children of Israel will suffer. The effects of war are described in painful detail so that all might take note.

It is easy to view armed conflict as a 'necessary evil', and in doing so to neglect or forget the pain and suffering that are its inevitable consequence. Our role as modern prophets, reminding others of the cost and impact of war, is one which should be taken seriously and practised conscientiously, for the sake of all people.

Lord, make me a peacemaker.

SALLY WELCH

Looking for a different way (part 1)

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends... You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.’

Of course, the disciples did not know then how much Jesus loved them. They did not know how he would suffer and die for them, nor that the love he commanded them to bear for one another would be one that demanded such great personal sacrifice. We are not promised that living a Christian life will be easy; we are not promised that we will be spared the experience of suffering or evil. We are promised only that we have been chosen by Christ, and ‘appointed... to go and bear fruit’. We must bear the fruit of a great, sacrificial love, not only for those we know but for those we will never know; not only for the worthy but for the unworthy, in the name of Christ.

The 2016 film *Hacksaw Ridge* tells the story of Desmond Doss, a conscientious objector who, during the Battle of Okinawa, rescued 75 men, lowering them by a single rope from an enemy-occupied ridge to safety. Doss found a way to live according to his beliefs which still offered him the opportunity to serve his country and help his fellow soldiers – a way which offers an example even today.

We may not have a loud voice in the public arena, but we can pray for a different way from that of warfare as a solution to a problem, and live out that prayer by seeking peaceful resolutions to conflict, whether in our private lives, in our workplace or in whatever public sphere we operate. One individual makes a small difference – many small differences will change the world.

‘Please, Lord, let me get one more’ (words uttered by Private Doss each time another soldier is rescued).

SALLY WELCH

Looking for a different way (part 2)

‘Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.’

As we read Zechariah’s joyful hymn as he looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, we witness the juxtaposition of the old covenant and the new, the promise and the fulfilment. We can be consoled not only by the reflection that one generation is always succeeded by another with new ideas and visions, but by the hope expressed here which transcends death itself. This reminds us that however dark the times we may be living in, emotionally, physically or spiritually, the light of hope and love cannot be extinguished.

As we journey further in our exploration of war and peace, we encounter again a different way, one which moves away from anger and conflict and embraces harmony and tolerance. This way is open to us all, through the grace of God. We need simply to ask.

The Battle of Goose Green took place in May 1982 during the Falklands War. The soldiers of the Second Parachute Regiment were pinned down, outnumbered three to one, and had been awake for more than 40 hours. They were running out of ammunition when the commanding officer was hit. Colonel Keeble took command, but before he issued any orders, he walked a little way off and prayed, ‘My Father, I abandon myself to you. Do with me as you will. Whatever you may do with me, I thank you, provided your will is fulfilled. I ask for nothing more.’ Then he returned to his command post and told two POWs that they were to return to their lines and tell their commanders that, as they were going to lose this war, the best thing to do would be to surrender. After negotiation of a surrender that left the Argentinians with some dignity and an opportunity to mourn their dead, the battle was finished and the imprisoned British civilians freed.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ (Matthew 5:9).

SALLY WELCH



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Readers' comments on **New Daylight**:

'Thank you for all you do to make every issue so readable and enlightening, giving us the opportunity to get closer to God.'

'Thank you to all the wonderful writers who bring scriptures to life and make them relevant for us in the here and now.'

'I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the notes for helping to keep me going with reading the Bible and shedding light on demanding passages.'



New Daylight is edited by Sally Welch. Sally is Vicar of Charlbury and Area Dean of Chipping Norton.

Contributors in this issue

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