

Winning!

Malachi 4^{1-2a}; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3⁶⁻¹³; Luke 21⁵⁻¹⁹

But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. [Malachi 4²]

Could the election in the US ever have a good result?

I knew we were in trouble when Vice-President Elect, Pence, spoke. He said 'This is a historic moment.' NO! This is 'an' historic moment. Whatever else the next four years hold it will clearly offend the ears! (Perhaps we should also congratulate the speech writer who wrote President-Elect Trump's gracious victory speech and him for being willing to read it!)

God still has a sense of humour! In a strange irony, Choral Evensong was broadcast on Wednesday evening and the choir of Ely Cathedral sang the Psalm appointed for the 9th evening in the pattern established in the 16th century, including verse 5 of Psalm 47: *God is gone up with a merry noise : and the Lord with the sound of the trump.*

The problem with anyone winning anything is that there is, by definition a loser. That is true of the election, but on this Remembrance Sunday we are also aware that in wars that is also the case. On this centenary of the Somme, could anyone ever think that there was a winner of that battle?

Paul alone avoids the theme amongst the readings for today - he thunders against lazy people and says that everyone should work to support themselves.

My grandfather quoted this to me on the day I left school and began my year off before my theological studies: **Anyone unwilling to work should not eat!**

I will avoid politics and any comment on an economy that seems to be incapable of creating sufficient jobs and creates so many who loose because of a system with a cruel imbalance designed to ensure that people cannot win. Paul's point is about willingness!

Malachi speaks about the constant struggle between good and evil, between God and the devil.

God's wrath will be known by the arrogant - they will **burn like stubble** but for those who **revere [God's] name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings** (for those who engage in any battle - physical or spiritual - there are wounds).

It will soon be time to use Charles Wesley's immortalisation of this text:

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.

The Psalmist is keen to tell us that God wins the cosmic battle for the universe - **his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.**

Amongst all the joyful noise (instruments, singing, the seas, etc) that celebrates this, and the universal acclamation of his victory we are assured that God hasn't changed - **he has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness** and victory hasn't changed his character or priorities - **he will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.**

Luke highlights both physical and spiritual battles:

- ✦ Jesus isn't at his most conciliatory - the third Temple had just been completed and here he is predicting that **the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another!**
- ✦ In response to Trump's campaign there have been plenty who refer to rumours of **wars and insurrections.... dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.** But that has been the case for centuries - and we are still here: which is why Jesus warns us off such things!
- ✦ The hardest part of Luke's record is his blunt statement that Christians will be persecuted and that **you will be hated by all because of my name.** We are promised support, but not escape. It is small comfort looking through this end of the lens when Jesus says: **By your endurance you will gain your souls.**

History is written by the victor - and so when Jesus speaks in the future tense he is speaking of the past! In all the fear, violence, regrets and mourning of this Remembrance Sunday and of a pre-Trump world, the good news is that God is in control and God has the final word!