

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November – Remembrance

Joel 2:12-14

Acts 2:37-42

Luke 15:1-7

There's a wonderful scene in the original Lion King movie which for some reason has been cut out of the remake – a shame because it seems to me that it's the real heart of the film, the turning point of the film.

Simba – the young Lion, heir to the kingdom, who ran away because he believed his actions had resulted in the death of his father, is pondering what to do next - whether to stay in his self imposed exile, ignoring his responsibilities, or whether to return and face them. The wise old monkey Rafiki teaches him a lesson about change and learning from the past.

Rafiki says to Simba – Change is Good

Simba replies - Yeh, but its not easy. I know what I have to do – but going back means I'll have to face my past – I've been running from it for so long.

Rafiki whacks Simba over the head with his staff

"Ow! What was that for?"

"It doesn't matter. It's in the past."

"Yeah, but it still hurts."

"Oh yes, the past can hurt.

The way I see it is that You can either run from it or learn from it."

He then goes to strike Simba again, but this time he ducks.

Today is Remembrance Sunday. Each year we wear poppies, each year we assemble around war memorials, each year we recite words, sing hymns and say prayers. Each year we remember the past. The actions of soldiers and other service people as well as civilians who have lost their lives in wars and conflicts. We remember them and their deeds.

And yet each new year brings with it across the world more horror, more violence, more fighting, more war and more death and suffering. More hatred, more division, more words that bring hurt rather than healing.

Isn't it about time we did actually learn from the past?

And learning from the past of course means doing things differently in the future.

In our gospel reading today, at the end of the story of the lost sheep, Jesus says *"there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who need no repentance."*

In other words there's more joy over one person who looks at their past and knows they need to change and, with the help of God, does all they can about changing, than over 99 who think that they are OK as they are.

We call this repentance. But repentance is not just about the past. Repentance is not simply about saying I'm sorry. Yes it is about looking back, but it's also about reassessing and looking forwards and changing. Making sure the future is different from the past.

It's about learning from the past and changing the future.

It's about turning around. Not doing the same old thing in the future. It's about beginning again.

And in the Christian context it's about God forgiving the past and working in and through us to make the future different.

And so it's not simply saying I'll try harder. It's about the power of God enabling me to change my whole being, change the things that drive me, that motivate me, that inspire me. It's effectively about a new me. We might use the words that Jesus did – it's about being born again.

The context for the stories of the lost sheep (and the lost coin and the lost or prodigal son which follow) is that Jesus was spending time with all the people the religious leaders felt he shouldn't be and they complained.

There he was with those on the edges, the poor, the petty crook, the collaborator with Rome, the ones who never darkened the door of the synagogue, the ones who were not "like us", the ones the religious leaders had nothing to do with.

And the religious leaders couldn't understand this. Call yourself religious, say that you are from God – but look where you are; look who you spend time with.

And so Jesus told them the stories.

And no doubt when the stories were being told, the religious leaders placed themselves in their own minds alongside the 99 sheep who didn't stray, alongside the coins that remained secure and at the side of the older son who continued working for his father. And I suspect that when we read the stories we tend to do the same. We are Ok – it's others that need to return to the fold, others that need to be found, others that need to change.

But surely the point Jesus was making is that we are all like the sheep that has gone astray. We might try to fool ourselves into thinking or believing otherwise, but the truth is that we are all far from how God wants us to be and we all need to change, to repent.

As the words that we use in our baptism service say : *We all wander far from God and lose our way; Christ comes to find us and welcome us home.*

Jesus made this abundantly clear when in the sermon on the mount he took a new approach as he reinterpreted the law. It's not about the things we don't do, but about the things we think and do and the person we are.

You have heard that it was said do not murder, but I say If you are angry, or if you insult your brother or sister you have sinned  
You have heard that it was said do not commit adultery but I say If you look at a woman lustfully you have sinned  
Turn the other cheek, give to those who beg from you  
Love your enemy, pray for those who hate you

When looked at like this we can easily see how far we fall short of God.

So on this Remembrance Sunday we come as individuals, as a church, as a community, as a country – and perhaps we can dream – as the whole human race. We come together with the past in mind. With the wrongdoings, the hatred, the anger, the mistrust, the differences, the history that has divided nation against nation, community against community and individual against

individual and we not only say sorry, but we pledge ourselves to change in the future and to be part of that change, to repent, to turn around and, with the help of God, to live with a different mindset.

To seek reconciliation and understanding rather than conflict and division.  
To look for common purpose rather than different viewpoints and opinions.  
To use words that build up and encourage rather than belittle and knock down.  
To put ourselves in the place of the other and walk in their shoes.  
To see all people as people made in Gods image and loved by him

If we are committed to making the world a better place – and surely that is what is at the heart of what we are about on Remembrance Sunday – then the change and the repentance has to involve us as well. Each one of us. Maybe we can only make a small difference, but every small thing can add together and multiply into something large.

This year let Remembrance Sunday be the beginning of something new for us and, let us hope and pray, for the world.