

+WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



The Holy Innocents - may light still shine in the darkness

Matthew 2.13-18

I have a confession to make ...

Since being in ministry I have always avoided talking about The Holy Innocents whom we remember the first Sunday after Christmas Day.

I usually focus on the more palatable First Sunday of Christmas readings which seem to keep that warm, fuzzy, joyful Christmas Spirit going.

I must admit I don't really want my peace to be disturbed; for the darkness to intrude on the light we celebrate at Christmas with the birth of Jesus. But this year I am determined to face up to the utter tragedy and evil of the massacre of the children of Bethlehem at the hands of Herod.

Because, after all, Jesus was born in a time of darkness, of oppression, where worldly power and greed are at odds with the coming of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. It is all too easy to want to shield ourselves and others from the evil that is in the world, from the images we see on our TV's and hear in the news and doomscroll on our devices.

As I write this, the dreadful shootings in Australia at Bondi Beach have just taken place, 15 people, including a 10-year-old child, have been murdered at an event to celebrate light; the Festival of Hanukkah. The USA has also witnessed yet another deadly school shooting at Brown University, Rhode Island.

These are tragedies, and we still face a world of conflicts and war where innocent civilians are caught in the crossfire of political agendas and, like the mothers of the slaughtered innocents, the children two years old and under, demand our attention.

Into the screaming and weeping, into the grief and loss, into the inexplicable events that often overtake us and to which we have no control, the Christ Child has come.

Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, who is there with us. Even when we feel that we cannot be consoled, like Rachel, God is still with us and Jesus says he will never forsake us.

The lights that shine out at Christmas, still shine out in the world, the light still drives the darkness away and the darkness will never, ultimately overcome, this is the Christian hope. The Prince of Peace has come to reign in our hearts and will bring in His peaceable kingdom, so we continue to pray for peace and for God to comfort those who are mourn.

Rev Karen Herschell, Rector of Hodder Valley and Diocesan Rural Renewal Officer

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