**Morning Praise @ Home 4th May 2025**

**A Service of Worship for the 80th Anniversary of VE DAY**

Heaviness may endure for a night:

*All* **But joy comes in the morning.**

God is our refuge and our strength:

*All* **A present help in time of trouble.**

Dear friends, we have come together on this day

to commemorate the anniversary of Victory in Europe.

We come together conscious of our need for God’s forgiveness

for the sin of desiring to dominate others,

which leads to conflict between people and war between nations.

And as we remember the many soldiers, sailors and airmen

who gave their lives to restrain evil and oppose tyranny,

so we also come in thanksgiving for those who continue to strive for peace.

We gather joyfully today, as those who gathered on that first Victory Day, glad of each other’s company and grateful for the laughter and love that follows times of sadness and loss.

But above all things, let us pray that God’s will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, as we join our voices together and say:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,**

**now and for ever. Amen.**

**Readings: Micah 4:1 – 5 Luke 15:18 – 24**

**A reflection from John marking the 80th Anniversary of VE Day**

VE Day 1945 was a huge relief when it came. Years of harshness, conflict, the loss of homes and loved ones had left their scars. When VE Day arrived at last, some just breathed a sigh of relief but many others celebrated, with parties erupting in street after street, village after village.

Today we cannot capture the elation of those heady days, yet it still matters to remember what we can, so as to remind ourselves to uphold the freedoms that were so hard won. Days of remembrance force us to recall the toughest of times, as well as the courage and fortitude of people, communities and nations.

Memories are evocative and powerful, they help make us into the people we are today and help us to relive our experiences, connecting us with a past we need to recall. Memories are also a link into the future.

When memories function well they can not only give birth to hope but also inspire us to rectify the sort of attitudes that led to conflict; memories can help create a vision of a more positive world for our children and our children’s children. Surely, every parent looks back at their own life and wants something better for their children.

Taken literally, the word ‘re-member’ is the opposite of ‘dis-member’: instead of pulling apart, to ‘re-member’ is literally ‘to put together again’, to heal, to reconcile.

This was at the heart of Jesus’ ministry. Time and time again the gospels show Jesus ‘re-membering’ the poor, the outcasts, foreigners, widows – restoring wholeness to the lives of ordinary people by his care and acceptance.

We pray in the Lord’s Prayer for God’s Kingdom to ‘come on earth as it is in heaven’, where all will be ‘re-membered’ and restored, where forgiveness is to be found and God’s grace is freely given.

We are all called to that better future. In the midst of war, Franklin Roosevelt’s famous 1941 State of the Nation speech talked about four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

In this he echoed part of the vision that the prophet Micah had so many centuries earlier: the vision of a different future – a hope that even now captures our imaginations:

‘they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.’ (v3-4)

Micah’s four freedoms included:

· Freedom from ignorance (‘He will teach us His ways’).

· Freedom from war (‘neither shall they learn war anymore’).

· Freedom from deprivation (‘everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree’).

· Freedom from anxiety (‘no one shall make them afraid’).

Micah also lived during a time characterised by the threat of oppression and the awful reality of warfare, a time when there was little defence against the diseases which from time to time afflicted his people.

But in spite of this background, Micah’s prophecy is of a future when all nations not only seek God and but also commit to live the way God wants them to:

v1-2, ‘In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established … . Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’

Like Roosevelt, Micah holds out hope that, beyond the violent realities of his time, a better world is possible. This comes about when people remember God and God’s ways. When the Lord is placed at the centre of our lives and values, it produces a revolution in human society, a real ‘re-membering’. As one commentator writes:

‘One of the reasons for the beauty of this passage is that it is totally out of harmony with the reality of our world, yet fully in harmony with what we would like the world to be’.

Micah’s prophecy isn’t a mere hope of something that might one day come to pass. It is a vision meant to inspire people to act now and work toward a better world. You see, restoration requires us to get involved and to work together.

‘A woman dreamt she walked into a brand new shop and to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

‘What do you sell here?’ she asked. ‘Everything your heart desires’, said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human could wish for:

‘I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear’, she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, ‘not just for me but for everyone on earth’.

God smiled. ‘I think that you’ve got me wrong. We don’t sell fruits here. Only seeds.’ ….

The fruit of peace and prosperity doesn’t just suddenly appear. Like all good gardeners, we have to learn to nurture seeds into fruit, both in our personal lives and in our world. As Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’. Making peace requires action, not passivity.

Yet how much progress have we made? It is a challenge not just for governments but for us all. We all long for a better world, yet how much are we willing to live and work for one?

So today, as we remember those who gave their lives seeking a better, more just, world, let us also commit ourselves both to pray and to work, in God’s strength, to make this vision a reality. **Amen.**

***Act of Commitment*:**

Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our fellow men and women: that we may help, encourage and comfort others, and support those working for the relief of the needy and for the peace and welfare of all the nations.

**Lord God our Father, we pledge ourselves**

**to serve you and all humankind,**

**in the cause of peace, for the relief of want and suffering,**

**and for the praise of your name.**

**Guide us by your Spirit;**

**give us wisdom; give us courage; give us hope;**

**and keep us faithful, now and always.** **Amen.**

**O Lord our God,**

**as we remember, teach us the ways of peace;**

**as we treasure memories, teach us to hope;**

**as we give thanks for the sacrifices of the past,**

**help us to seek your ways for the future in this world,**

**until your kingdom comes in its fulness.** **Amen.**

God of peace, who raised Christ Jesus to victory over death,
keep us ever mindful of the cost of making peace,

of the call to be peacemakers,
and of the carefulness needed to keep the peace,
in our lives, in our land and in our world. **Amen**.

God of the nations and of this nation, thank you for bringing us through the hardships of the Second World War. Comfort those who still grieve, and challenge we who live on to value and build on what was won. On this, the 80th anniversary of victory, may the red in our flag remind us of the sacrifices made; may the blue in our flag, remind us of the freedoms we now enjoy; and may the white in our flag remind us of the dove of peace, which we must never take for granted. We ask this in Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen.**