**PEACE MM O/L**

WELCOME & NOTICES

SING *GOD IS OUR STRENGTH AND REFUGE*                                                    DIVINE HYMNS

Opening prayer

SING *IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL*                                                                         LUKE TELFORD

SING *STAY SAFE*  - practice

SING *STAY SAFE -* perfect

Prayers for safety etc.

VIDEO - VE DAY                                                                                                        ex Zoe

Thanksgiving and prayers for peace

**We’re so grateful to the girls (and the boys) for reminding us today about how peace was won in Europe 75 years ago at such a great cost. Did you have a socially-distanced street party to celebrate? (I mean on Friday, of course, not in 1945!) Did you see the Red Arrows fly over Basildon? If you blinked, you missed them! Dawn tried to snap a picture, but – gone!**

**I do hope you enjoyed the video - there was lots to think about, wasn’t there? But there were two phrases in it in particular that made me stop and ponder and pick up my pen and start scribbling away. The first one was actually at the end – the poem that Hannah, our young Town Crier, read out, called *The Cry for Peace.* Because that’s *still* the cry, isn’t it? *Peace!* Now, we thank God that there hasn’t been a continent-wide war in Europe since 1945, but we only have to think about Northern Ireland or Yugoslavia to realise that what we celebrate as *peace* isn’t always *real* peace. And how many have been killed in Europe by terrorists since we celebrated peace in 1945? Well, I googled it and I started to count…. but I gave up when I got to 2,000. No, we still need to *Cry for Peace.***

**And the other phrase came earlier in the video when it said that the people wanted to *return to the start of a normal life.* Well that rings a bell - doesn‘t it? – even louder than those bell-ringers in St. Pauls’ that we saw. We can’t wait to get back to *normal life,* can we? Except that *normal life* will stillinclude all those stresses and worries and conflicts that are….well, *normal*. I guess what I’m saying is that peace can be elusive whether or not it’s 1945 and whether or not we’re in lockdown.**

**So while I thank God that we’re not actually dropping bombs on each other at present, I do wonder whether there’s a *different* sort of peace out there somewhere….a peace that *doesn’t* depend on circumstances….a peace that will *last*.**

**Well, a desire for a peace like that is nothing new. Let me read to you about what happened on a Sunday evening in April in Jerusalem in about the year 30AD:**

**Jn. 20:19-22**

**So, the disciples were**

* **locked in – check!**
* **They were afraid – check!**
* **And they were bereaved – they’d lost their Friend Jesus on the previous Friday.**

**Like us, they were living in a time of lockdown, fear and death. And Jesus came to them *at just that time* and what was the first thing He offered them? Peace!**

**Yeah, I’ve heard it all before – come and get religion and you’ll have peace! That might work on a Sunday, but it doesn’t work on a Monday. Except that Jesus had already told them this: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (Jn. 14:27).***

**You see, what the world gives, it can take away: it gave peace in 1918 and took it away in 1939. We may have peace one day until a virus comes and suddenly we have no peace any more! But what Jesus gives is different – and what’s the difference? Well, two things: He *showed* them something and He *gave* them something.**

* **What did He *show* them? *His hands and side.* And we read, *The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.* Overjoyed? He was showing them His *wounds*! Some of those soldiers who returned in 1945 were so seriously wounded that they had to be hidden away as if the people were ashamed of them, but Jesus *showed* them His wounds. You see, His wounds *guarantee* our peace as we remember every time we break bread at communion. His wounds are stronger than any circumstances outside us. However *you* may be wounded, Jesus bears those wounds, too.**
* **And what did He *give* them? He breathed His *Holy Spirit* into them. You see, as Jesus’ wounds take away our sins, He doesn’t just leave a vacuum – that would quickly be filled up with more sins! He gives us His Spirit and His Spirit is the Spirit of peace. His Spirit is stronger than any emotion or temptation inside us.**

**We do thank God for the events of 1945, but we don’t live in 1945, we live in 2020. And Jesus’ wounds are as fresh today as they were then and each wound still cries out, “I love you!” And His Spirit is as strong today as He was then. Every time you breathe, breathe in His Spirit to give you strength and to give you peace – whatever the future brings.**

SING *PEACE TO YOU*                                                                         GRAHAM KENDRICK MUSIC

THE GRACE