

VE Day Reflection

75 years ago today, church bells rang out, people were hugging strangers, dancing in the fountains in Trafalgar Square and in the streets. I'm sure we've all seen the photos. Even the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, although a little more subdued was celebrating

We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead.

Thanks for the sobering words of reality, Mr Churchill. Can we get back to the party now?

Today's day of celebration and national pride to commemorate the events of 75 years ago is something of a damp squib. No dancing in the fountains, no street parties, no church bells, and the acts of worship are done in isolation.

We are celebrating, but what are we celebrating? Are we celebrating the anniversary of the defeat of the Nazi war machine, or the liberation of Europe, the liberation of millions of oppressed people from occupation? They may sound like the same thing, but there is a subtle and all-important difference.

On May 8th, 1945, King George the VIth spoke of giving thanks to Almighty God. After the First World War many people questioned the existence of a God that allows war, especially a second war after the war that was supposed to end all wars.

At the beginning of the 1920s, a young C S Lewis concluded that atheism was the default position of any right-thinking person and yet, the more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that God existed and eventually he became one of the significant influential Christian thinkers of the 20th century. Another 20th century thinker, Francis Schaffer, concluded that this disillusionment with God was one significant factor in the decline of church attendance in the mid-20th century.

So, why are we celebrating? In Luke 10 verse 27, Jesus tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. He then went on to explain who our neighbour is in the parable of the Good Samaritan, a carefully chosen example because Jews and Samaritans did not get along with each other – they were far from best friends or good neighbours.

Most of us have 2 immediate neighbours. What if the one on the left was to oppress the one on the right? Surely loving our neighbour means we should disagree with the neighbour on the left to protect with love the neighbour on the right?

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Sometimes loving our neighbour means admonishing, disagreeing with, even restraining another neighbour, but it should be done out of love, not out of self-righteousness or a sense of self-importance. In 1939, Nazi Germany invaded its neighbour, Poland, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Which brings me back to my original question. What are we celebrating? A self-righteous victory over evil, or the liberation of millions of repressed neighbours? I pray it is and always will be the latter and that we will love and forgive our neighbours, now and always.

God bless and stay safe
Keith