

2018-10-14 ... 6.30pm Evensong ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Joshua 5:13 – 6:20; Matthew 11: 20 – end

'God of All'

Introduction ...

Joshua and the walls of Jericho – often included in Sunday School lessons – at least in former years ... along with Noah and the Flood and David and Goliath.

They are great – powerful – narratives ... but they do present some difficulties ... all have a strong element of destruction ... of great devastation for some people, some lands. If we'd heard **Joshua 6: 21** – one more verse the reading would have ended:

'Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword in all the city both men and women, young and old; oxen, sheep and donkeys.'

Trevor Dennis – whose stories I sometimes read, was asked to write a paraphrase version of the Bible for 7 – 11 year olds.

It's called **The Book of Books (Lion; 2003)** This is how he concludes this Biblical passage:

'The Israelite soldiers clambered over the rubble, went into the city and killed every person and every animal inside it: men, women and children, old people, babies, cattle, sheep and donkeys. Except for a woman called Rahab and her relatives, because when Joshua's spies had entered the city, Rahab had given them shelter and information, and then had helped them escape.

A fearful silence settled over the place.

At the beginning, when they were not yet a people but only a family, God had told their ancestor Abraham to be a blessing to all those he met. "Remember, Abraham, be a blessing!" God had said.

The Israelites at Jericho seemed to have forgotten that entirely.'

It's an interesting and important point, isn't it? And I think it links back to the beginning of our Old Testament reading as well as forward to part of our New Testament one.

PTO

Joshua 5: 13,14 – Joshua asks a man who appeared with a drawn sword next to him:

‘Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?’

The answer?

‘Neither ... but a commander of the army of the Lord.’

Really interesting and important that he doesn't say he's **‘one of us’**.

For us – God is not an English man ...

... though God did choose to fulfil his purposes through the Israelites ... yet he's not willing to be completely identified with them.

And Jesus – who is the fulfilment of those purposes in tonight's New Testament passage rails against Jewish – Israelite – populations, comparing them in faith terms unfavourably with Gentile populations.

Conclusions ...

So I think there are some important things for us ... as we draw close to this year's Remembrance Sunday ... we shouldn't think of God as being on the side of one nation and not another ... but of being on the side of justice and of well-being for all ... and supporting whichever groups of people working in line with this.

As we approach Brexit – is God concerned for us? Yes. But he is also concerned for the peoples of the rest of the EU.

As we think about our industry and our standard of living ... is God concerned for us? Yes. But he is also concerned about the effect of climate change on the poorest peoples of our planet.

Rooted as far back as **Genesis 12** ... God wants to bless **all** the peoples of the earth.