

Sunday Thought

13th March 2022 Second Sunday in Lent

Readings

Genesis 15: 1 - 12, 17 - 18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3/ 17 - 4/ 1

Luke 13: 31 - 35

Consequences

Consequences are much in mind during these present barbaric actions of Russia against Ukraine. We are made aware of the horrific follow-on from this conflict - the tragedy of one man's crazed ambitions bringing the destruction of people's lives, families, homes, and futures. Further consequences are the greater threat of world destruction leaving communities and people with physical and mental trauma which may well take generations to heal. Like many others, it is beyond my belief that all this is the result of one man's actions - a man, whom I read, never removes the Christian cross he wears around his neck. I fear for him as today I read Paul's tearful words to Christians in Philippi. *'There are many who makes themselves enemies of Christ and the Cross.'* Read on to verse 19 to discover the awful personal consequences!



There are other consequences leading on from the cross. Resurrection, new life, Jesus' victory over evil being worked out in the conquest of the world by love. We must hold on to that in our prayers for the people of Ukraine, Russia and every other nation facing the tyranny of oppression, hunger, poverty, ignorance I am glad the excerpt from Paul's letter continues to the first verse of chapter four, so we can hear his challenge. *'Stand Firm !!' Hold on in faith.' Move forward, clutching God's promises made to you as citizens of heaven, and prepare for the consequences, when everything is gathered in love and present mysteries make sense - in Jesus!*

Hold on because there **are** other consequences. Today the greater part of the world sees Russia's archaic aggression and responds with loving actions, - providing necessary supplies, hospitality, accommodation, fervent prayer and deeply moving embraces for Ukraine and all its people. The world will tremble far more at this explosion of love than at a destructive missile, because the 'love-blast' comes from tenacious faith. At the moment it seems we must leave the evil consequences in the wounded hands of our Just Lord, but the loving consequences are in our hands - the hands held out at about the level of our compassionate hearts. Paul reminds us we are *citizens of heaven* running like the Olympic athlete, eyes fixed on the finishing line - the glorious Kingdom of God - the consequences beyond the far side of the Cross.

What a challenge for us in Lent to weep and pray with Jesus for the Kingdom of God and to get on with helping him build it. Like Abram in our other reading today, preparing to live in the Land of Promise. This too has a background of military aggression and occupation. Abram received a covenant promise from God which would result in good and bad outcomes covering the whole story of the Bible and culminating with Jesus! Abram's response, which God approved was the one we are still challenged to make - 'O K Lord. We have a covenant. You have promised me a new life and a new world. I'll keep moving forward, trusting you.'



We hear of more fearful consequences from Jesus' words in today's gospel reading. Herod was the ruthless autocrat of that day. The story recalls how, while in Jerusalem for the festival, Jesus was approached by some Pharisees who warned him that Herod was determined to have his blood. Jesus responded by telling them he was not running away. Just the opposite. He would continue to work defeating evil. He had three days to go for victory. The Cross would be the sign of evil's final defeat and Jerusalem the place where it would be accomplished. After all, this holy city was the place which had despatched so many other prophets. Jesus then did what most of us will have done in recent



days. He wept for the city and for all God's people. *'If only you knew how, like a mother hen with her brood, I have longed to gather you all, - but you wouldn't come to me. So, there will be consequences. There will be judgement and justice. But I will bear it all for you and prove to you the wonderful grace of God for all who trust Me.'*

[A Prayer to pray with people of Ukraine and all who live through war \(with Psalm 27 in mind\)](#)

Lord, our God, we are witnessing evil times with terrible consequences.
Help us to stand firm, trusting your promises
to make us stronger than our fears
to deepen our faith and
to provide us with safety, shelter, security.

All I desire is your presence with me and
your guidance for my way.

As a citizen of heaven I know I need not despair.
My future is secure,
I will trust you to be with me always.

