

Reflection Wednesday 2nd March

Ash Wednesday. **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

6^w Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²^w So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵^w And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶^w And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹^w Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In this passage we hear Jesus speak of three areas of Jewish piety, giving, prayer and fasting. Our news bulletins have mentioned little of Covid in recent days as a result of the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. There is great concern for the people of Ukraine and concern for peace across Europe.

I have heard on the news of people travelling for 26 hours to leave Ukraine that they might cross into Poland for safety. For six hours they were driving and for two 10-hour periods they were in queues without food, water or toilet facilities. Most were women and children as all men under 60 years of age are not allowed to leave for they are to stay and defend their land. Others have travelled for days to find their way to safety and many have received a warm welcome in other lands.

As we enter on this Ash Wednesday the season of Lent, which we see as a time of restraint and self-discipline, I wonder if you can spend some time not showing off your piety before people but coming before God in Prayer, maybe fasting for one meal and giving some of your money to go to aid relief work in Ukraine. All We Can, a Methodist based Charity have set up a donation system (see their website) or pass a donation into you local Methodist Church saying where the money is to go and the Church Treasurer should be able to send it on its way with donations from others. May we pray that the Russian authorities will find a way of restraint withdrawing troops and weapons rather than feeling they will lose face; may they see that to turn back is the decision of the “bigger” person.

On Sunday 13th March Rev Andrew Roberts is leading a service of Prayers for Ukraine at Kinver Methodist Church at 6.00pm. The service will include prayers, the lighting of candles, silence, pictures and songs (including at least one song from Ukraine). It will be both an act of worship and of solidarity with Ukraine and the peaceful people of Russia.

In this Lenten season let us focus upon the people who are faced with walking “into the wilderness” not knowing where they are, where they are going and whether they will be safe.