

Dear Friends,

Last week, I saw an internet post where someone asked the question: “Does it seem to anyone else that humanity is just bouncing from crisis to crisis right now? Pandemic to inflation to the Ukrainian conflict to inflation again. When will it end?”

It’s easy to see where this anonymous internet author was coming from. As we watch events unfold in the Ukraine... as we try to guess the motivations and plans of a president in Russia... it’s not hard to lose hope and feel helpless.

I’ve been watching the conflict unfold with a very different perspective than I ever have before. As I told my congregation during a Remembrance Sunday sermon, I come from a relatively spoiled generation (being born in 1980) and from a very spoiled country (The United States). While we have certainly not been free of conflict, it’s a very different thing to watch events from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Even though Ukraine is still a good 1,000 miles from the UK, it feels a whole lot closer than similar events did when I lived in the States.

Yet, I’m somewhat grateful for that. While it’s not comforting or fun, it’s good to be reminded that we are part of a global community.

At Bible Study this morning, our church talked about Jesus’ instructions for us to “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal”. I asked the group to consider the old question: if your house was on fire and you had time to grab one thing, what would you take?

In the coming months, as the U.K. continues to welcome in refugees from Ukraine, we will see both the best and the worst of humanity. We will see people open their homes, their wallets, and their hearts to the refugees. We will see others sink to the depths of racism, nationalism, and fear of “the other” taking from our resources.

It’s important for us to remember that those coming into this country will often own nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Their homes are now rubble. All of their earthly treasures are gone, stolen by an invading country.

We still, largely, have our treasures. We will be called to share those treasures with those who have none. What do we get in return? The reminder that these earthly treasures ultimately mean nothing. That instead our treasures are in the relationships we are building with other humans. In pointing them to a relationship with God. In ultimately realising that these are the treasures that are truly worth pursuing.

A lot of people right now have said their “hearts are with the people of Ukraine”. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” I hope that we are as good as our word in the months to come as we show where our hearts truly are.

Sincerely,

Revd. Adam Payne