

Refrain:

Reflection

During the Civil War in America, Abraham Lincoln was asked if God was on his side. “Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side,” said the President, “my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.”

I guess this is the question that is always asked in times of war and strife. But I think Lincoln was absolutely right. The question is rather if we are following and obeying Him.

Israel had to learn this in a very hard way. They thought God was always on their side. God gave them the covenant and as a symbol of his presence He gave them an “ark”. The ark was a rectangular box (*'arôn*) made of acacia wood, and measured 4 by 2 1/2 feet. The whole was covered with gold and was carried on poles inserted in rings at the four lower corners. The lid, or ‘mercy-seat’, was a gold plate surrounded by two antithetically placed cherubs with outspread wings. In this ark was the stone tablets of God’s commandments that He gave Moses. The ark was thus a symbol of His presence but also a clear indication of what He required from His people.

And they needed to remember this, always and ever. In verse 21b we read:

“In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ²² tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ ²³ For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. ²⁴ He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.”

And how did they remember this? - By building a wee monument with 12 stones. It was important for them to remember that if they wanted to be on God's side, they had to follow His commandments of love and trust through obedience.

This practice of erecting stones as places of remembrance was repeated all through the Bible and even in our time. It was important for the people of God to be reminded of His presence. After Jesus died on the cross, His cross became the symbol of His endless mercy. It became a reminder for everyone that the cross was the ultimate sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. It also reminds us that He broke the power of death so that all who has faith will inherit God's kingdom.

In our time people have erected buildings of stone to remind people of the presence of God. This particular church was erected in 1750 and since then has been a beacon for all the people of the Parish to be reminded of God's presence.

After the first world war, people erected memorials of stone to remember all those who have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of future generations. Our particular memorial was unveiled in the summer of 1921 to commemorate the lives of 44 men of the Parish and later after the second world war a further 22 names of men were added.

In Scotland mountain climbers will carry a stone with them and once they reached the mountain top they will put their stone on a cairn of stones, as a sign of remembrance of their effort.

WHY STONES? Well they cannot be easily moved and always seem to survive the worst of weather and decay. And memories can easily die. So we as humans do need a reminder.

And each and every war memorial must be a reminder to us that in times of war and peace, we must always ask ourselves are we still on God's side. Because if we are on His side, He is always right. He knows better than any other human being. He knows and holds the future.

And we can be on His side simply by believing that He died for our sins on the cross, overpowered death and gave us the sure and certain hope of His kingdom that will never end.

Let us all go out and build a wee cairn... as a reminder to us all that we must strive to be on God's side wherever we go.

Amen

d Hebrew *Yam Suph*; that is, Sea of Reeds