



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

The Archbishop attended worship at St Mary's Church in Tadcaster and gave the sermon which follows in full

It is good to be with you this morning. I didn't have a church to go to this Sunday, and it was when I saw on the news at the beginning of the week that the River Wharfe had flooded again, that I thought it was about time I came to Tadcaster and stood alongside you in what has once again been a difficult time for many homes and businesses. My heart goes out to you. Not least, because my house flooded again this week.

Dating back to the 13th century, those who built Bishopthorpe Palace knew that the River Ouse flooded from time to time so made the whole building on what we call an Undercroft, which is, I suppose, a natural flood defence. So the waters come in, and it is still a huge and dirty inconvenience, but they don't yet come up to where we live and work.

If you go round to the river-side of the Palace there are little plaques on the wall showing where the water level was in, say, 1752 or 1831.

They put them there because floods in those days was a relatively rare event, something that happened every 50 years or so.

I've been Archbishop of York for about 18 months and this week was the fourth time the house flooded.

What was once an exceptional event, has become fairly commonplace.

It's the same here in Tadcaster. Global warming is real. Climate change is happening.

We urgently need to change the way we inhabit the planet, lest we end up so destroying its fragile equilibrium, that floods and storms and forest fires completely engulf us.

But there are other storms raging in our world at the moment, which even put the inconvenience of a flood into a greater and more immediate perspective.

While I woke up to an inundated undercroft this week. The people of Kyiv - let us remind ourselves a European city, a popular holiday destination, only a 2 and a half hour flight from London - woke up to bombs and fighting in the streets as President Putin, breaking his word and tearing up the treaties of which he himself was a signatory, chose to illegally and despicably invade Ukraine.

Today, the Archbishop of Canterbury and I are asking all churches and all Christian people to pray for the people of Ukraine, for peace and for a withdrawal of Russian troops.

I will offer a prayer for Ukraine and invite us to keep a time of silence at the end of this sermon.

But what can prayer do, you might ask yourself? Isn't it just wishful thinking. How can it stop tanks and bombs?

Today's readings helps us.

On the mountain of Transfiguration, Peter James and John see Jesus as he really is.

This is what happens when we pray. We say the words that Jesus gave us, and in particular we ask, 'Your kingdom come to Lord, Your will be done.'

Not the kingdoms of the world, not the will of despots and tyrants, not even my own will, but the will of God as we see it in Jesus Christ.

To pray, therefore, is to see things as they really are and as they can be if we align our wills and our purpose to the will and purpose of Jesus Christ. If, as Paul says to the church in Corinth, "We do not lose heart"... (2 Cor. 4.1), and "with our unveiled faces see the glory of the Lord as if reflected in a mirror, and are ourselves transformed." (2 Cor. 3.18)

Prayer matters and prayer helps, because prayer changes things, beginning with us and giving us the resolve we need.

NATO is not about to declare war on Russia and Ukraine must be feeling very alone. But there are things we can do, such as offering generous humanitarian aid; receiving refugees and supporting countries in the region who will see vast movements of people; imposing the stiffest possible sanctions on Russia, including a long and long overdue hard look at some of the dubious and dirty Russian money that sloshes around London. But these things won't just hurt Russia and make it far harder for them to sustain their subjugation of Ukraine, they will hurt us as well. We need to be prepared to make painful sacrifices ourselves, which will affect our own pocket and our own standards of living.

And this, again, is where prayer will help, because it will help us to see what is right and strengthen our resolve to do it. This is a wake up call for us. The waters are rising. An unscrupulous and despotic enemy really is at the gate. We have taken peace for granted, and we have neglected the international bonds and associations between and nations that have done so much to secure peace for most of Europe for most of the past 77 years.

That changed on Thursday, and now we must change, and as Christian people that must begin in prayer and proceed by acts of generosity and sacrifice for the good of all.

As Jesus is transfigured, the disciples hear God speaking. "This is my son, my chosen", says God, "Listen to him." (Luke 8. 35)

May our church and our nation listen today to the voice of Jesus Christ, the voice of peace and good order. May Russia also hear the voice of Christ and the voice of peace. And may the people of Ukraine know the comfort, blessing, resolve of Christ in this terrible, dark hour of need. And now let us pray earnestly for peace in the world and for the part we must play to make it happen.



Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/speaking-and-writing/sermons/sermon-st-marys-tadcaster-27-february-2022>