

## Friends

This Sunday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, marks the 710th anniversary of the start of the two-day Battle of Bannockburn, which was fought on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1314. In a feat of arms still celebrated in Scotland to this day, the army of King Edward II of England was routed by a Scottish army numbering only a quarter of the English, under the leadership of Robert the Bruce. It formed a major turning point in the First War of Scottish Independence which ended 14 years later with the restoration of Scottish Independence under the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton. Scots wha hae!

Many countries, if not all, have stories of something similar; stories where they have been occupied and have in some way thrown out (or not) the invader. Whether it was the Scots versus the English, the English versus the Normans, the Normans versus the Romans, the Romans versus the Huns we can keep on going back through our history and to this day, we only have to turn on the news or open a paper to see that very little has changed.

Jesus came into a particular country at a particular time, when the same was true. The Romans had overcome Israel and the land was occupied territory. It was a place where a soldier could demand a Jew would carry their pack for a mile, where taxes were levied in unfair manner, where life was cheap. Jesus modelled radical acceptance. If asked, they should offer to carry the pack not one mile but two, if Caesar demanded taxes, then that which belonged to Caesar should be returned to him. The longing for a leader who would oust the hated occupier in the style of Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn was not fulfilled in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

As our world continues to be wracked by wars, occupation, lack of water and fear for the future, we do well to act where possible and pray at all times for these situations. Deciding what it means to follow the Prince of Peace in the context of war in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere is an important part of growing in our discipleship – not so much the actual decision, which will make little difference to the people on the ground in

those places, but the thinking about where God is in it all. This thinking and wondering about God is actually the work of theology and in doing it, we come to deeper and broader understanding of who God is, and who we are in his Kingdom.

God bless, Vicci