

Tyndale Thought for the Day

13th May 2020



I recently found the order of thanksgiving service for Revd Don Black, who died in 2005. He was just one of that generation who came out of the war in 1945 and after theological college devoted the rest of their years to the Baptist ministry. Don was a forthright preacher with a passionate commitment to justice and peace; for over 20 years he headed the Baptist Union Department for Social Responsibility. His wartime service was in the Royal Navy. He once told me that his experience of “active service” was “1% sheer terror, 99% sheer boredom”.

People talk of needing to recapture the wartime spirit to see us through the Coronavirus pandemic. If so, let’s remember that the war wasn’t all heroic excitement or even danger. For many, it was just dogged toil and . . . waiting. It could have been very soul-destroying. Yet people like Don emerged from it not as cynics complaining about six wasted years, but with vision and conviction about what they wanted to be and to do after it was over. One thinks of others whose wartime experience whether in uniform or in civilian reserved occupations must have seemed a bit of a bind.

Of course they found opportunities for recreation and amusement too (on a long car journey, Dr Morris West had some hilarious stories to relate about inter-factory seven-a-side rugby). But such people must have spent a lot of those long, seemingly empty hours and days thinking and praying about what would make a better world when peace came, and what their own part in it could be. Cue for us too?

Keith Clements