

## **Sermon**

### **Saint Peter's**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November**

### **Justice and Peace in the Middle East**

**Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25**

In an open letter on Thursday, in a statement by Australian Holocaust survivors, we read,

‘We are the last witnesses to the unspeakable horrors of the Nazi regime. We are witnesses to the antisemitic propaganda that turned our friends, neighbours and the general public against us in Europe. We remember the six million Jewish lives lost because of this hatred.

On 7 October 2023, we witnessed the horrors of Hamas’ terrorist attacks in Israel and the resulting war, with its terrible loss of life. Since then, we have seen an unprecedented outpouring of antisemitism raging on our streets, on our television screens, on social media and in our universities.

We write this letter now because today marks 85 years since Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass). On 9 November 1938, the Nazi regime murdered Jews and attacked Jewish life, wreaking terror and burning synagogues.

Rather than condemn these atrocities, the world stood by and watched.

Never have we, the survivors of the Holocaust felt the need to make a collective statement such as this until now. Never did we think that we would witness a re-enactment of the senseless and virulent hatred of Jews that we faced in Europe. The actions of Hamas are so familiar, so barbaric, yet instead of condemning this, the response across the globe is a shameful spike in antisemitism.

Our memories and our experiences in ghettos, concentration camps and in hiding - seeing our families and communities vanish - compel us to raise our voices and implore humanity to reject hatred, bigotry and violence. To recognise the agenda of Hamas, condemn it accordingly and call for the immediate release of all hostages - men, women, babies and the elderly.

We cannot allow history to repeat itself.

In the face of adversity, we have learned the importance of resilience, unity, and hope. We believe in the power of education and remembrance to prevent the atrocities of the past from occurring again. Together, we can strive for a world where every individual, regardless of their faith, regardless of their cultural background, can live in peace and security.

Antisemitism is one of the world's oldest and most contagious viruses. We ask all Australians to denounce the antisemitism and hatred that we see today in our beautiful country and across the globe. We ask you to stand with us.'

In a local newspaper editorial on Friday, we read, in response to their letter:

'Some now in their 90s, they were all witnesses to the Holocaust. They were among its victims. They know what they are talking about. .. That they see parallels between then and what is happening now should sound alarm bells with everyone – Australian and non-Australian – living in our country and elsewhere.

Few words written since October 7 have been more relevant as Australia and countries across the world watch the horror of what is happening in the Middle East and try to make sense of the mindless upsurge of anti-Semitism in our midst. Out of the mouths of the bloodthirsty thugs who run Hamas, an Iranian proxy, comes not the slightest remorse for its gross massacre of innocents and the anti-Semitism it has stirred, but the promise, like that from Hamas politburo member Ghazi Hamas, that the terrorists are aiming to repeat October 7 "many times ... there will be a second, a third, a fourth October 7 until Israel is totally annihilated". And warnings like that from the top Hamas leader, Khaled Mashal, when, in discussing

“freedom” for Palestine, he noted cynically “nations are not easily liberated ... the Russians sacrificed 30 million people in WWII to be free from Hitler’s attack”.

‘That is the terrorists’ utterly evil mindset,’ the editorial continues. ‘And that is why the alarm sounded by the Holocaust survivors, with their experience and wisdom, must be heard. And by those who see moral equivalence between Hamas’s evil, and the Jewish state’s inalienable right to defend itself and its people against the terrorists’ unprovoked’ barbarity.

The editorial continues,

‘The same mindless, pro-Palestinian, and anti-Israel sentiment doubtless underpinned a gathering of 200 journalists working for the .. ABC to consider its coverage of the war. Anxiety was reportedly expressed about the ABC’s “unwillingness” to use language such as “invasion”, “occupation”, “genocide”, “apartheid” and “ethnic cleansing” in relation to Israel. The ABC employees were also concerned that coverage of Israel’s ground invasion of Gaza “relied too heavily on the talking points of the Israel Defence Forces”. Not much, however, about the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry’s unverified claims about the number of Palestinian casualties caused by Israeli bombing.

The “Free Palestine” protests being seen across Australia and the world are similarly ill-conceived. They have more to do with the

wave of anti-Semitism that the Holocaust survivors have warned of than any serious concern for the plight of Palestinians suffering the consequences of the unprovoked war launched by Hamas on October 7.

Holocaust survivors have sounded the alarm. It is a warning that must be heard, not just in Australia, but across the world. The likely consequences if we do not could not be more dire.

‘If the bell tolls for Israel’, Bob Hawke saw, ‘it tolls for all of us.’

The global movement of antisemitism and violence a reminder:

All have fallen short of the glory of God.

All are in need of salvation from God.

The salvation freely available, in Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God.

The Son of God, in whose death, God has reconciled the world to himself.

Bringing peace on earth.

And goodwill to humankind.

An earth in need of peace.

A humankind in need of goodwill.