

A balm in Gilead

I am sure I am not the only person in the Corps who has been sharing in a number of online meetings during this period of isolation. In addition to joining with others for our own morning worship at Hadleigh, I have been enjoying Marc Harry's excellent series of Salvation Meetings on Fortress Radio. I also usually try to listen to the morning worship broadcast at 8am on BBC Radio 4 and it is good to be able to do so without having to get ready to go out for the bus.

As part of this Sunday's service (24th May) they included a recording of the rich bass voice of Paul Robeson singing 'A balm in Gilead':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okl2XbTM7xM>

I must confess that, although I have played this as a solo on many occasions, as well as Donald Osgood's band arrangement I was a little unclear as to the scriptural context behind the song. In Jeremiah, 8:22 we read: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?'

The verse comes at the end of a chapter berating the people of Judah for their disobedience, pursuing their own course and disregarding the requirements of the Lord, which rang a chord following Steve's mid-week thought last week. God pledges to give away their wives and fields to others, to take away their harvests, the grapes on the vines and the figs on the trees.

The final verse refers to the balm in Gilead, a substance of healing power, very expensive but available to them from God as the only source of effective healing:

There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole;

There is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,

But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.

If you can preach like Peter, if you can pray like Paul,

Go home and tell your neighbour he died to save us all.

In Sunday's worship, Steve quoted the line 'God's Holy Spirit came and we are not the same' from Song 867 and it seems fitting to end this week's thought with these words:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46BeswGMiJQ>

A miracle! Yes, a miracle!

God's Holy Spirit came and we are not the same,

For he touched us and filled us with his love.

As Pentecost approaches, may we be revived by the Holy Spirit once again.