**The Rt Revd Barry Hill, Bishop of Whitby reflects on Luke 4.14-21 for the Third Sunday of Epiphany, 26th January.**

Hello. Tomorrow as a Church, we remember Holocaust Memorial Day. Not that many years ago, I remember standing in deep and cold snow walking the grounds of Auschwitz Birkenau, where for me, a number of family died at death camps, or on their way to death camps. And I remember standing by the gas chamber, not far away, 100 yards, 150 yards from the back garden of the Commandant of the camp, where his children played in the swimming pool, where his family gardened, as reflected on in the film, ‘The Zone of Interest’. And I remember wondering how on earth they could continue with their lives hearing the screams as they sunbathed.

And then I remember the work of Viktor Frankl, the Jewish psychotherapist who was imprisoned in Auschwitz Birkenau, and whose experiences have been developed a whole school of psychological thought emerging from that. And amongst his many reflections in his book, ‘Man's Search for Meaning’, he talks about how he sought to find the humanity in people who dehumanised him. Of course, the story of Auschwitz Birkenau didn't start in 1939. It started many years earlier in that gentle, subtle, pervasive and yet all the same evil way of dehumanising our neighbours, of seeing people as slightly less than they are and slightly less than they are, and slightly less than they are.

Viktor Frankl survived his time in Auschwitz Birkenau by doing the opposite. He summoned the humanity in people who refused to recognise his. He greeted guards with good morning and found not all, but some, started to see his humanity as he saw theirs. He was pulled out of the line for the gas chamber on several occasions. “Oh, Doctor Frankl, could you come and help with this or that?” by the very guards who he had greeted.

In our gospel reading today, we hear Jesus's sometimes called ‘manifesto’ from the words of Isaiah: ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.’

Jesus is all about seeing the God given to humanity in others. Jesus is all about declaring to those who are overlooked by the world for all sorts of reasons: God is with you. As the angel to Mary: you are highly favoured. God sees you. God is with you. And so, as tomorrow we remember the horrific events of the Holocaust, and we remember those around the world today who are unseen and battered and tortured and dehumanised by others, and we think of those places in the world where that story of dehumanising is earlier in its trajectory, and yet all the more dangerous. So, we hear the words of Jesus that calls out the humanity in others, that recognises the transformative call of God on someone's life that changes everything.

May God bless you and may we this day see every inch of humanity in those for whom we may just be tempted by the wider world, by populism, by social media, to see slightly less so. In the name of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.