

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

April 2022

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."
Matthew 26: 38 KJV

Greetings,

Aeschylus (524 – 456 BCE) declared that *"In war, truth is the first casualty."*

This continues to be so. Today, however, valiant reporters file news from the frontlines and brave citizens communicate the horrors of war from their mobile phones. The ghastly truths about conflict are available if we are brave enough to read, listen and watch for them.

Facing unbearable truths takes both courage and will. We must choose not to look away, change the programme, or flip to the "sports" section. In her wartime novel "Mrs Miniver", author Jan Struther depicts her eponymous hero faced with such a choice.

Walking through London, she observed a newspaper stand sign:

*"The lower half of one of them had been folded upwards by the wind, hiding everything except the word "JEWS." Mrs. Miniver was conscious of an instantaneous mental wincing, and an almost instantaneous remorse for it. However long the horror continued, one must not get to the stage of refusing to think about it. To shrink from direct pain was bad enough, but to shrink from vicarious pain was the ultimate cowardice. And whereas to conceal direct pain was a virtue, to conceal vicarious pain was a sin. Only by feeling it to the utmost, and by expressing it, could the rest of the world help to heal the injury which had caused it. Money, food, clothing, shelter—people could give all these and still it would not be enough: it would not absolve them from the duty of paying in full, also, the imponderable tribute of grief."*ⁱ

We owe a "tribute of grief" to those who suffer deeply.

This is no easy task and many of us find it necessary to pace our vigils. One friend has decided not to watch footage from Ukraine at bedtime. A wise decision given our 24-hour news coverage. On occasion, the night is when our presence, our watching,ⁱⁱ is most needed. Jesus begged his friends to share his dreadful wait for arrest. But they were unable. We can't all be "Mrs Minivers".

One way to cope with the onslaught of horrific news is to transform it from voyeurism to prayer. Read the newspaper – look at the TV – WITH GOD. "Watch" with our Heavenly Parent. Lift up intercessory prayers for the injured, the dead, and the displaced. Lift up prayers for the rescuers – and the perpetrators, they too are God's children. Lift up prayers FOR God. Her mother's heart is breaking.

Jesus still pleads for our watchfulness, our prayerfulness. He stills asks us to share in his suffering with humankind through *"the imponderable tribute of our grief."* Compassionate presence is OUR place at the foot of the Cross.

Deepest Blessings,
Brenda

ⁱ Jan Struther, "Mrs Miniver". The 1942 film adaptation won the Oscar for "Best Picture" the following year. They still make good reading/viewing.

ⁱⁱ Watch, from the Old English "*waeccan*" – to remain awake, keep watch, be vigilant.