

# PENWORTHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

## Sermon for Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2016

**Reading:** Luke 10.1-11,16-20

**Reflection** 'Peace to this house!'

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Amidst personal disagreements about Leaving or Remaining: 'Peace to this house!'

In the horrendous increase in casual and criminal racism: 'Peace to this house!'

Where opinions differ between the nations of the United Kingdom: 'Peace to this house!'

Where priorities vary between cities and countryside, young and old, between graduates and those who didn't go to university: 'Peace to this house!'

When we don't know where to turn for leadership in our parliament: 'Peace to this house!'

When we are confused and bewildered by share prices and exchange rates: 'Peace to this house!'

'Peace to this house!'

Following our voting in the EU Referendum last week it seems to me that all we actually know is that 51.9% voted one way and 48.1% voted the other.

I think it is fair to say that nobody actually has a clue about what that actually means.

We have entered into a period of uncertainty. The value of our currency has fallen, business confidence has taken a hit, both the Conservative and Labour parties are in turmoil, legalities and constitutional arguments are flying around, and we're probably heading for a General Election in the near future.

We have decided to leave the EU, but we have no clue as to how 'leave' is defined. The EU is taking the words of our ballot papers literally and wants to begin divorce proceedings, but we're floundering about in shock.

The whole process has been a complete dog's dinner.

A tactical manifesto promise has completely backfired. A complex relationship given cursory examination by a rushed renegotiation. A poorly thought out piece of legislation to enact the poll. A national debate fueled by scare-mongering, wishful thinking, fear of the other, and none of the incredibly complicated economic, social, historical, and political questions fully engaged with.

All this in the context of decades of politicians blaming Europe for everything with no mention of any of the positives it has brought.

This context also gave rise to European Parliament elections being an opportunity to protest against the major parties so we mainly elected folk who didn't want to be there in the first place so we were never fully represented or committed.

The same seems to be true from when the idea was first raised and we never fully committed to the process in the 1950's, so it was created using a continental model.

It also feels as if we joined a group for our own economic benefit and for a greater voice on the world stage as our empire declined, but our fellow Europeans came together to work collectively for peace, mutual benefit, and to enable smaller nations to band together to become a world power.

We are in a complete mess. We have folk debating whether the result is binding. Retreating from promises made during the campaign. Arguing for a second referendum. Trying to define leave as a minor tweak to remain. Anecdotal evidence of folk regretting their choice. We have a complete lack of clarity about what was actually voted for. It seems to be for several and at times contradictory reasons.

We have politicians vying for promotion, responding to their local contrasting numbers to ignore the overall result to try to remain in the EU and leave the UK, and all of them completely missing the vacuum this creates.

Which leaves me just wanting to keep on repeating: 'Peace to this house!'

I heartily regret not seeking to find ways to engage publicly in the debate. I clearly had too much faith in our politicians to make a positive and clear case for remaining or leaving, and not enough courage to enter into the slanging match that our national debate never rose above.

We can but hope that sense will prevail, that personal ambition will take second place to the national interest, and we will find some way of creating and agreeing a consensus.

What we must do is pray, and to act in ways which encourage: 'Peace to this house!' **Amen**