

Morning Praise @ Home 12th November 2023

Remembrance Sunday

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46.1

We meet in the presence of God.

We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

Bible Readings

Micah 6: 6 – 8

James 3: 17 – 18

Reflection

Whenever tyrants are on the loose - Conflict erupts. Their thirst for power and hunger for territory cost countless lives, time and time and again.

It's Remembrance Sunday, and of course we gather to remember. But what do we remember? Who do we remember? Why do we remember?

In World War One, in the four and half months of the Battle of the Somme, around 420,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers died – and that's before you count the hundreds of thousands of French and Germans who also died. We remember them. But what a waste.

World War 1 was supposed to be the 'war to end all wars', but twenty years later humanity was involved in another horrific conflict – the Second World War, and even a new concept in warfare: Total War.

In WW1, warfare was largely confined to the front lines of opposing armies, by the Second World War anywhere could be the 'front line' with the wholesale devastation from the air of towns and cities and their civilian populations – people in their homes, in the workplace, people at rest and play. Women and children joined the war dead en masse, on all sides of the conflict. We remember them.

D-Day in June 1944 reminds us of all the contradictions and confusions that war inevitably involves. **So let's remember one particular group who took part in the battle for Normandy:**

John Hayes of the 6th Airborne Division involved in the glider assault on Pegasus Bridge. **Ken Adam**, an RAF fighter pilot involved in ground support operations. And two Commandos: **George MacFranklyn** killed on D-Day; and **Ian Harris** who fought at the River Orne and was awarded the Military Medal.

They all have one thing in common.

Perhaps an incident in the life of **William Howard** will give you a clue. He was in Naval Intelligence and assigned to a Cruiser for the D-Day invasion.

He was summoned to see the ship's Captain, who asked Howard

'What do your duties consist of?'

'Intercepting enemy radio transmissions in combat zones, Sir.'

'So you are fluent in German?'

'Aye, Aye, Sir.'

'Where did you learn the language?'

'At school, Sir'

'Where was that?'

'In Germany, Sir.'

'But you are British?'

'No, Sir.'

The names you have just read were in fact Germans and Austrians who chose to fight as part of Royal Naval intelligence against their own nations. There were 10,000 more who did the same thing. They were known collectively as 'His Majesty's Loyal Enemy Aliens'.

Our perception of war is sometimes so simplistic – that there was a good side and a bad side. We British were the good guys, Germans were evil. But as you see, there are at least ten thousand reasons why a naive preconception of conflict doesn't work. Almost 20,000 French civilians died through allied actions in the Battle for Normandy. No wonder the French say that 'Normandy paid the price for the Liberation of France'. We remember them.

Now, in our own time:

Another tyrant steps forward and Russia invades Ukraine with dreadful consequences. The conflict has massive implications across the world. Russian leadership is clearly wrong. War crimes are being conducted and yet there are countless Russians who are either left in the dark or want nothing to do with such a war.

Hamas steps forward on 7th October and commit terrible atrocities in Israel. Many Palestinians want nothing to do with it. Israel retaliates with huge and indiscriminate force. Massive breaches of International law are taking place. Many, many in Israel and Palestine simply want to live together.

Here's a thing: back in 1948 the British, recognising the horrors the Jews experienced in the Holocaust, set up the State of Israel in what was Palestine. In a longstanding tense situation Israel was given a home and the Palestinians were progressively deprived of much of theirs. The situation has festered and spilled into conflict again and again.

It's never a case of just goodies and baddies – we do well to never forget that. Israeli and Palestinian – we remember them.

At times, war may be necessary, it may be right to fight – but it is never good. So why do we remember?

Well, Christians are well used to remembering. Every week in churches such as this, we remember the one person who died for us all. We remember Jesus, not just to dwell in the past, not just in sorrow – though certainly grief and sorrow is part of it: but more importantly we remember that our response to love God mirrored in the death of Christ, is about transformation for the future.

In our first Bible reading we heard the vision of God's ancient prophet Micah - one of God's pictures of hope for the future: that we should learn the ways of God, and when we do, then in the words of Isaiah nations will turn weapons of war into agricultural tools – a picture of the tools of destruction being transformed – to produce life-giving abundance. It's a prophetic dream but an important and ultimately practical one where justice, mercy and peace are widely pursued above power and superiority and advantage.

We all forget this at terrible cost.

The Christian understanding of 'peace' is about building relations between people, between communities, between nations, which positively and constructively creates a love and care for others founded on justice for all.

And for that we will always need God's help – to change each and every one of us into people who have a passion for peace, mercy and justice, and a care and love for others. To follow Jesus' example: to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace: for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God;

May God give peace **God give peace**

for those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;

May God give peace **God give peace**

for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;

May God give peace **God give peace**

for civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity;

May God give peace **God give peace**

for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free;

May God give peace **God give peace**

for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.

May God give peace **God give peace**

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.

As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

THE ACT OF REMEMBERING

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, **we will remember them.**

Ever-living God we remember those whom you have gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence; may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples and establish harmony among the nations.

RESPONDING IN HOPE AND COMMITMENT

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us that have not yet been cast out by love:

May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people,

And live lives of justice, courage and mercy; through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer.

Amen

Closing prayer

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**