

12th November 2023 – Morning Service

Remembrance – Let Peace Break Out

Rev Alan Combes

Call to Remembrance

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918 the guns fell silent on the Western Front, to bring to an end the First World War. Our nation and commonwealth has recalled that moment and all those lost in subsequent wars through our Armistice and Remembrance events down the decades. Decades during which the men and women of our armed services have continued to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

And so over 100 years later, we gather here today to remember the lives sacrificed and those traumatised and injured in protecting us and others. May we have such a devotion to justice and freedom that the heroism of all who fought, and still fight, may continue to be remembered in a nation of service and in a world of peace.

This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Lamentations 3.21 -23

As we gather - God of all peace and love says welcome

StF 66 – The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

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| 1) The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning,
New every morning,
Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord;
Great is thy faithfulness. | 2) The gift of peace from the Lord never ceases;
His loving care never comes to an end.
He is here as we worship;
Near as we worship;
Great is your faithfulness, O Lord.
Great is your faithfulness. |
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Edith McNeil (Verse 1) & Megan Ashmore (Verse 2) © 1975 Celebration (Verse 1) CCL No. 515642

Prayer of Praise

Loving God, as we so often see so much trouble in the world today caused not by religion but by human greed and desire for revenge, power and control, help us to remember the words of Jesus who said: to be great, first you must serve. Jesus who calls us to love our neighbour, who reminds us that Your ways Lord are not always our ways.

So help us today to remember with thanks those who have given their lives in sacrifice and service of others. Help us as we remember with sadness the suffering, destruction and pain caused by human conflict. May we today COMMIT ourselves to be peacemakers and peacekeepers wherever we can, in school, at home, at work and across the world. **Amen**

Reflection - when peace broke out in the trenches

1914-1918 is called the great war. It was long ago and today it is difficult for us to understand or comprehend the reasons and scale of this war. It was a terrible time; more than 20 million died, more than 20 million were wounded. Yet early in the war, in the Christmas of 1914, right in the middle of the battle field a miracle happened - a miracle of peace. For a brief moment, peace broke out, despite the orders of the commanders and authorities.

Earlier in December, Pope Benedict XV had written to both sides and he appealed for a ceasefire at Christmas asking 'that the guns might fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang.' His appeal was turned down BUT on the front line some Germans soldiers had placed candles on their trenches and began singing Christmas carols.

Suddenly, Jesus, a baby, the prince of peace was somehow present amongst the guns and the mud and the cold and the bullets. The British responded by singing carols of their own. Soon there were cries of greeting from the trenches, wishes of peace and good will at Christmas time. Then a few very brave soldiers put their heads above the parapet, they risked their lives, and in the middle of what was called no-mans lands, in the cold hard winter, enemies met as friends. They shook hands, exchanged gifts - like chocolate and cigarettes - they talked and even played football!

They realised that the enemy was human, just like them. The authorities, the commanders, were angry that soldiers had been friendly with the enemy. They were threatened by this 'outbreak' of peace and it was only when the troops were relieved by new platoons, who had not shared in this experience of peace that the fighting started again. Somehow, the story of Jesus, baby Jesus, had the power to overcome the desire for war. The spirit of the sense of peace that is the heart of God's message to us broke through all the hatred and mistrust. This moment of peace is a modern miracle and speaks of the true power of God in Christ to change people.

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, you have shown that you love us so much by sending Jesus Christ, to show us how to live, to show us what's important and to prove to us that you care for us and that every hair on our heads is counted.

So Lord we are ashamed and sorry, for we see how often we lack love and compassion, especially for people who are different from us. We are sorry for how our greed and selfishness and sheer stupidity, often brings hurt and harm to your precious world.

Gracious God, it's even difficult sometimes to see the point of wearing a poppy, or what difference two minutes' silence will make, so forgive us when we give up doing good and give up on the future...

[Silence]

May we know that through Jesus our weakness and failings are all forgiven. Through him we can always make a fresh start. Help us today to look to the future, but be guided by the past. We know we cannot change what has been but must not repeat our mistakes.

So as old and young come together before you. Take the very best of our lives. Bind us into one people and help us to share the common values Jesus has taught us; to love God and to love and care for each other, to build a better future, and with your Holy Spirit, make that future a reality. Amen.

StF 707 – Make me a channel of your peace

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| 1) Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt, true faith in you: | 2) Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy: |
| Ch) <i>O Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.</i> | 3) Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving unto all that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life. |

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Act of Remembrance

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.

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. **We will remember them.**

[2 minutes silence]

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, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Reading: Matthew 5:1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

Reflection

Harry Patch was born in 1898 and until 2009 was one of the few remaining survivors of the First World War. He was the last surviving British soldier to serve in Belgium or France, a private in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry. After the war, Harry did not speak about his experiences in the trenches and ONLY when he reached 100 years old did he start to tell his story. In November 2004, at the age of 106, Harry went back to the battlefields in Belgium and was introduced to a German - Charles Kuentz 108 - who fought for Germany at the Battle of Passchendaele. Their meeting was warm and they exchanged gifts. Patch said, ‘I was a bit doubtful before meeting a German soldier BUT Herr Kuentz is a very nice gentleman, he supports unity and peace – and so do I.’

In Jesus's day, there were also many terrible wars. There were people - like the Israelites - Jesus' people, who had lost their land, their king, their homes, their temple. They had been sent away from their homes, and even when they returned, they were ruled over by others. Jesus could see, even 2000 years ago, that peace and justice together are the key to a good and right society. He said: Matthew 5:3–9 (NRSV)
“Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, the meek and those who hunger for what is right. Blessed are the merciful and the pure in heart.”

Jesus came to show us God's way - that we should be concerned for those who are poor and those who mourn, that we should respect the humble and always seek what is right, that we should be forgiving and pure in heart. But above all he said: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

So just like those young soldiers in 1914 in the trenches - I wonder what each of us can do to enable peace? I wonder what God is calling us to be and to do in the name of Peace? I wonder if we might be brave enough to put our hands and heads up out of the trenches and go and meet and greet people different from ourselves... This is why we remember today, so that Peace May Break out and that we may be known as peacemakers in God's name. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace:

For 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

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 this day our daily
bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive
those who trespass against us. And lead us not
into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine
is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever
and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your
kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in
heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us
our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from
evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Responding in Hope and Commitment

When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.

Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service.

Will you strive for all that makes for peace? **We will**

Will you seek to heal the wounds of war? **We will**

Will you work for a just future for all humanity? **We will**

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**

Song – May the God of Hope

May the God of hope

Fill us with all joy and peace

As we trust in Him

As we trust in Him.

So that we might overflow with hope,

By the power of the Holy Spirit.

So that we might overflow with hope, with hope

By the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Blessing

Send us out to be beacons of peace in a dark world of conflict. Make us instruments of peace for whoever
we meet and wherever we go. In the name of the Prince of Peace, our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.