

13th November 2022 – Morning Service

Remembrance Sunday

Rev Peter Bradley

Call to Worship - Malachi 4:1-2a

The Lord Almighty says, "The day is coming when all proud and evil people will burn like straw. On that day they will burn up, and there will be nothing left of them. But for you who obey me, my saving power will rise on you like the sun and bring healing like the sun's rays."

StF 117 – Sing praise to God

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| 1) Sing praise to God who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of love,
The God of our salvation;
With healing balm my soul he fills,
And every faithless murmur stills:
To God all praise and glory! | 3) The Lord is never far away,
But, through all grief distressing,
An ever-present help and stay,
Our peace, and joy, and blessing;
As with a mother's tender hand,
He leads his own, his chosen band:
To God all praise and glory! |
| 2) What God's almighty power has made
That will he ever cherish,
And will, unfailing, soon and late,
With loving-kindness nourish;
And where he rules in kingly might
There all is just and all is right:
To God all praise and glory! | 4) O you who name Christ's holy name,
Give God all praise and glory:
O you who own his power, proclaim
Aloud the wondrous story.
Cast each false idol from its throne,
The Lord is God, and he alone:
To God all praise and glory! |

Johann Jakob Shütz, Frances Elizabeth Cox & Honor Mary Thwaites © Michael Thwaites CCL No. 515642

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of love, you make the sun rise and the rain fall on the good and the evil alike. You show no partiality; you have no favourites. You are a stronghold for the oppressed; you do not overlook the cry of the afflicted. We worship and adore you. May we sense your healing presence on this day of remembrance; and may we know your reconciling love, now and always; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

Forgive us, God of compassion, for our share in the sin of the world. Your Son our Saviour taught us that we should love our enemies. We confess that hatred and hostility have often driven out love. Your Son our Saviour taught us to love one another as he loved us. We confess that selfishness and pride have often driven out love. Forgive our failure to do good, our compromise with evil, our feeble efforts for justice and peace, and our hard, unmerciful hearts. Grant us such awareness of your limitless grace that we may be agents of your reconciling love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

StF 705 – It is God who holds the nations

- 1) It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand;
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land.
It is God who builds his City on the Rock and not on sand:
May the living God be praised!
- 2) It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour;
Who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;
In the discipline of freedom we shall know God's saving power:
May the living God be praised!
- 3) When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;
When self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great:
May the living God be praised!
- 4) He reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease:
For the sake of life tomorrow may our love for it increase;
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace:
May the living God be praised! God be praised!

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Reading: Isaiah 25: 1-9

Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago. You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will honour you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you. You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall and like the heat of the desert. You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.

In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'

Act of Remembrance

Brothers and sisters, as we remember in silence before God those who have died in two world wars, and so many other conflicts including the present time in Ukraine, let us commend their souls anew to His eternal mercy; and let us pray that He would grant us grace to serve Him faithfully to our life's end, to the honour and glory of His most Holy name.

[Two minutes silence]

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.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, and lover of all whom you have made; we commend to your loving care the souls of our brothers and sisters whom we have remembered before you, asking you to grant that they may rest in peace; and we humbly pray that we may have grace to serve you faithfully all our days, and come at last with them to the eternal joy of your Heavenly Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

StF 132 – O God our help in ages past

- 1) O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;
- 2) Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.
- 3) Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.
- 4) A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.
- 5) The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their cares and fears,
Are carried downward by the flood,
And lost in following years.
- 6) Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.
- 7) O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while life shall last,
And our eternal home.

Isaac Watts *CCL No. 515642*

Reading: Matthew 5: 1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said:

‘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 be shown 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 because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.’

Reflection

“Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children.” Matthew 5: 9.

When we meet, as we do today, to remember those who gave their lives in armed conflicts, we are compelled to use our imaginations. I was 8 months old when WW2 was declared, and I was 6 and a bit when it ended. So I can’t really remember very much about it. Very few of us, I suspect, have direct experience of war, and the numbers who can tell us about the huge military conflicts of the 20th Century are inevitably diminishing as time rolls on. In these circumstances, how can we talk about ‘remembering’?

Well let’s look at what we do on Remembrance Sunday. Most towns and villages have their traditional event. We take part in time-honoured rituals, using familiar liturgies. We keep two minutes silence. At some, the names of the dead are read out. We lay wreathes at War Memorials.

But in all this, we are engaging our imaginations so that we can picture the kind of people our predecessors and ancestors might have been – the horrors they experienced, the pain, the misery, the sense of bewilderment, the anguish and boredom, the bravery and heroism. In our imagination we try to place ourselves in their shoes.

But we are going even deeper than that; we are rehearsing and exploring our own humanity. Could we have done what they did? Would we have been heroes? Would we have coped with the fear? When we remember the fallen, we are, as it were, recognising our own limitations and perhaps promising ourselves to try to overcome them. By remembering, therefore, we not only bring the past to life, we are implicitly testing ourselves, morally and spiritually.

At the very heart of our Christian faith there is also a great and holy Act of Remembrance that has nothing to do with war. It is an act of remembering that we carry out whenever Holy Communion is celebrated. When Jesus was at the Last Supper with his friends, he broke bread, blessed God, and gave the bread to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Ever since, for the best part of two Millennia, the Church has followed that command, and in doing so has discovered that somehow the risen Christ himself, in and through the breaking of the bread, is present with us, in our very midst.

None of us, of course, were present at that last meal in Jerusalem, so how can we talk authentically and honestly about remembering? Again, it is about entering the past imaginatively in such a way that the past becomes present to us. But it has a deeper dimension. We also are involved in testing ourselves morally and spiritually. We are brought face to face with who we are. We recognise our frailty, we seek forgiveness, and we receive the gift of God's grace.

When Jesus talks about peace, and peacemakers, in the Beatitudes, this is what God's grace is all about. The word 'peace' can have various meanings, but it is fairly certain that what Jesus had in mind was the establishment of right relationships between person and person. There are some people who are always storm-centres of trouble and bitterness and strife. Wherever they are they are either involved in quarrels, or the cause of quarrels, between other people. They are troublemakers. There are people like that in every society. On the other hand, thank God, there are people in whose presence bitterness cannot live; people who bridge the gulfs and heal the breaches and sweeten the differences of opinion. Such people are doing a God-like work, for it is the great purpose of God to bring peace between his children and himself. On this day, this is the peace-making that we remember.

At the heart of all remembering, whether that be the special form of remembering on Remembrance Sunday, or the act of remembering associated with the Last Supper, God himself is present. He holds all time in his hands, past, present and future. He holds us, his creation, in his hands, and therefore we are caught up with him, and with each other, in the mysteries of life. We give thanks for the gift of imagination and pray that through our imaginations we may be so inspired by God that we become more compassionate, more honest and more devoted to that love and peace that passes all understanding.

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. |

Prayers of Intercession

On this Remembrance Sunday, we remember past wars: those who fought in them; those who lived through them; those who died in them. [*Silence*]

We pray for the victims of past wars, remembering before you, loving God, those who died in battle, or from the consequence of injury or disease, and those who mourned or still mourn them. We remember those permanently maimed or disabled, and those psychologically scarred or disturbed. We pray for an end to the suffering of war. [*Silence*]

We pray for the victims of current conflicts, remembering before you, loving God, children trained to hate and fight, families turned into homeless refugees, and lands laid waste and made barren. We remember those blinded and crippled and those driven insane by nightmare experiences. We pray for an end to the destructive hatred of war. [*Silence*]

We pray for the peace of the world, remembering before you, O God, areas where there is armed conflict, and especially in Ukraine. We pray, too, for all those who are working for peace. We remember that you have called us to strive together for the coming of your kingdom of love and peace. We pray that you will equip us for the task with the faith that knows that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. These things we ask in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace, who taught us, when we pray, to say:

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.**

StF 696 – For the healing of the nations

- 1) For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord;
For a just and equal sharing
Of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
Help us rise and pledge our word.
- 2) Lead us forward into freedom;
From despair your world release
That, redeemed from war and hatred,
All may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
Fear will die and hope increase.
- 3) All that kills abundant living,
Let it from the earth be banned;
Pride of status, race, or schooling,
Dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
May we hallow life's brief span.
- 4) You, Creator-God, have written
Your great name on humankind;
For our growing in your likeness
Bring the life of Christ to mind;
That by our response and service
Earth its destiny may find.

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Blessing

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, this day and for evermore. **Amen.**