

8th November 2020 – Morning Service

Remembrance

Rev Alan Combes

Call to Worship - Lamentations 3.21-23 & Isaiah 40.31

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

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint.

StF 338 – There is a redeemer

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| 1) There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son.
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One. | 2) Jesus my Redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain. |
| <i>Ch) Thank You, O my Father,
For giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit till
The work on earth is done.</i> | 3) When I stand in glory
I will see His face,
And there I'll serve my King for ever
In that holy place. |

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Introduction

It's Remembrance Sunday and throughout the world the poppy is associated with the remembrance of those who died in order that we may be free, but how many of us are aware of the reason of how and why the poppy became the symbol of remembrance?

Flanders is the name of the whole western part of Belgium. It saw some of the most concentrated and bloodiest fighting of the First World War. There was complete devastation; buildings, roads, trees and natural life simply disappeared. Where once there were homes and farms there was now a sea of mud - a grave for the dead where men still lived and fought. Only one other living thing survived - the poppy. Flowering each year with the coming of the warm weather, it brought life, hope, colour and reassurance to those still fighting.

For many this is a difficult day, but also a chance to remember wars that have taken place in the past and those we are still involved in fighting today.

We do not want war, but sometimes it has seemed that fighting has been the only way to deal with great evil. Sometimes it takes the wisdom of the passing years to show us whether or not particular conflicts were right and just, or not.

Some in our communities are too young to remember the major wars, so we take time today to stop, to remember and to listen to the people and stories from the past so that we may all better understand the terrible reality of war and better consider the consequences of our actions.

Prayer of Adoration

Lord God - it can be difficult to praise you on a day like today. A day when some cry out in frustration and confusion - for the loss of loved ones, in the context of war.

Gracious God

- help us to see the world as you do
- to see beyond the pain and suffering of past and present
- to see the glory of your creation
- the wonder of life, your hand at work in and through all things.

Help us to see the presence and the power of your love IN us

- expressed every day through families, churches and communities.
- expressed in giving and action for the benefit of others as people try to do what is right.
- expressed in the sacrifice of Jesus - who came into the world to show us your love, perfect love - and yet our reaction was to reject that love and to kill Jesus.

Lord God we praise you for your love, so generously and freely given to us in Christ. And in a day full of words - we pause - and simply ask that we might see and know the presence of your love beside each one of us. In silence we ask you to help us - by the Holy Spirit - to welcome the love of Jesus afresh into our lives... *[Silence]* **Amen**

Reflection Part 1

In the Second World War my grandfather was a marine engineer serving in the merchant Navy bringing much needed supplies across the Atlantic to a rather desperate and isolated British Isles. On one fateful day his ship, like many others, was attacked and torpedoed by German submarines. He had to jump into the dark icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean not knowing if he would live or die. He was amongst the lucky ones plucked from the sea and brought safely home. Meanwhile, his friend Eric, was knocked overboard by the blast of a shell only to be miraculously thrown back onto the deck of his own ship by a huge wave that he had fallen into... Sadly many others lost their lives and it is difficult for us to imagine what that must've been like, alone in the cold, deep swell of a mighty sea.

Today we recall the millions of service men and women who gave their lives in the great wars so that we might enjoy peace and freedom today. We also remember that there have been many other conflicts since – the Korean War, the Falklands war, Kosovo, the Gulf war, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other places where our troops have fought and died to keep the peace. The ability to remember is a wonderful gift that God has given us. Some of our memories are happy and those recollections lift our spirits. But for many their memories of war or the memory of those injured and lost, lead them to weep. Even though the Second World War ended 75 years ago and the First World War over 100 years ago, it is important that we remember that many still bear the scars of war today.

Reading: Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Reflection Part 2

1500 years before Jesus was born, God's chosen people were in slavery in Egypt. By God's grace they escaped but in subsequent years they were dominated by the Assyrians and captured and taken into exile by the Babylonians. They lost their homeland, their temple, their independence and their king. These experiences shaped them.

In Isaiah 10:34-11:5 there is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, called the "Branch of David," who will destroy Israel's enemies...

All these things happened long before Jesus was born and what we begin to see is how events before his birth shaped people's expectations of his life. Somehow the victorious King Jesus on a donkey was never going to be what the people wanted. So even as they cheered Jesus into Jerusalem for his amazing preaching, teaching and healing ministry, it didn't take long for the crowd to wonder – 'where is the destroyer of Rome we thought we were promised?'

Our past shapes our future, our successes and regrets, our ups and downs. They all form our sense of self and our place in the world and influence our actions and reactions. How often – I wonder – when we react to what someone has said or done – are we actually reacting to events that may have impacted our lives long before that moment?

Our past shapes our future. This is why today is so incredibly important and why remembering matters. Being aware of what influences us, remembering what is important, acts as a compass for the future.

At the Last Supper Jesus took bread and wine, something we have been unable to do for many months. This precious moment of grace exists as an act of Holy Remembering that brings us back to the cross of Christ. As we remember those who have been injured or died in war, people we may never have known, whose bravery and sacrifice meant they gave their lives for us, so we remember Christ's ultimate sacrifice – his death on the cross for our sins and salvation.

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore do not fear... "be still, and know that I am God."*

Christ died that we may live.

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, we recognize War as an ever present part of this your precious world.

We recognize with sadness

- Our inability to get along, to share the world and its precious resources.
- Our inability to talk and grow alongside people of other cultures, languages and faiths.
- Our greed and desire to possess places, people and power.

We weep with sorrow as we see so many conflicts in the world today. We despair as we see children drawn into fighting and killing on the front line of wars across the world. We grieve as we see people made homeless fleeing from conflict as refugees.

Lord God we recognise that often religion is blamed as the source of conflict and we regret, when in the name of faith, conflict is seen. We are recognise with sadness how often religion is hi-jacked by those who have other motives of power and control.

Gracious God, even though conflict today across the world may sometimes feel distant to us, we are reminded that this is one world, that there are families in this country and across the world who will have lost loved ones recently. Through our action and our in-action we are part of these situations. We are sorry for not striving harder for peace, locally and globally. Forgive us Lord. *[Silence]*

Lord God, thank you that you have promised to forgive us through the life, death and resurrection of your son Jesus Christ – the prince of peace.

Through your immeasurable grace in him - we are forgiven. Amen – thanks be to God.

StF 141 – Abide with me

- 1) Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.
- 2) Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O thou who changest not, abide with me!
- 3) I need thy presence every passing hour;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's
power?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.
- 4) I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy
victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.
- 5) Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the
skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain
shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Henry Francis Lyte CCL No. 515642

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]

Prayers of Intercession

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.

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;

L: May God give peace **R: 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;

L: May God give peace **R: 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;

L: May God give peace **R: 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;

L: May God give peace **R: God give peace**

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

L: May God give peace **R: 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.

L: May God give peace **R: 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.**

StF 446 – I will offer up my life

1) I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart.

2) You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost;
Giving up Your life to death,
Even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.

Ch) *Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name
For the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed
By this thankful heart.*

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Response and commitment

The Kohima Epitaph: 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**

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) Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.
- 6) 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

Blessing

Before us stands a monument as yet, it bears no text:
a monument remembering the war... that's coming next.
One day we'll come and read its names, of loved ones we used to know;
But perhaps if we remember now they'll never need to go...

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