

Sunday 8th November 2020

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Suggested hymn Dear Lord and father of mankind

Watch [hymn](#)

Prayer

Loving God, when the night is endless and we long for morning, when all around seems dark and we long for light, when love seems a far distant memory and times are tough may we remember your presence with us and feel your love around us. When in the darkness we wait and watch, let our prayers lift us and the hope of the kingdom fuel our actions.

In times of strife may we look higher than the darkness at our feet, may we lift our eyes to wonder at the glory of your creation, holding the stars in our hand like a thousand wishes that become a thousand expressions of love. As we pause to reflect on all that you have made and done, may we be filled with love, a love that overflows into our life together and brings your kingdom closer.

As we worship together we offer you this time in thanks for all your love to us, and in response we offer love to one another, family friends and strangers, holding one another in the oneness of creation and working together for the benefit of all your people. As followers of Jesus we say together,

Our Father....

Reading Psalm 78:1-7

Reflection

Telling stories about our experience is important because we can find out not only what happened but why things happened. Psalm 78 speaks of God and the stories about what he has done but it also speaks of the importance of passing on these stories so that the next generation will understand the part these stories played in where they are and also, will understand the need to remember.

Our memories are complicated things, we remember the good times quite vividly but our minds can blot out or mute the memories of bad times, and yet it is from these times that we often learn the most and remembering them helps us to make better choices in the future.

Today we are remembering all those who lost their lives in war, we remember them for giving their lives to make a better future; we remember also those whose lives have been changed by war, the injured and the bereaved; however, we also need to remember what caused the war and try to learn from the experience so that it might not happen again. Sadly, we have plenty of practice at learning from war and wars continue around us in the world today. We are only too aware of how fragile peace is in our world.

We wear a symbol to mark our remembrance of those who have lost their lives in war, the poppy. Scarlet poppies grow naturally in conditions of disturbed earth throughout Western Europe. In late 1914, the fields of Northern France and Flanders were ripped open as the First World War raged through Europe's heart and once again poppies grew where the land was disturbed.

The poppy came to represent the immeasurable sacrifice made by comrades and quickly became a lasting memorial to those who died in the First World War and later conflicts.

To mark the end of the first world war a series of children's books was written and I would like to share one with you -

Story Where the poppies grow by Hilary Robinson and Martin Impey

Watch the [story](#)

Suggested Hymn

O God our help in ages past

Watch [hymn](#)**Act of remembrance***We pause to remember**They shall not grow old as we who 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**Silence**When you go home, tell them of us and say,**“for your tomorrow we gave our today.”***Poem**

Peace comes through love.

Love of life,

love of others.

A sense of belonging,

a sense of knowing.

Peace is a state of awareness;

that we are one,

that all experience is shared,

that giving of ourselves

is giving to ourselves

and sharing is living life to the full.

Knowing love,

being loved,

accepting love,

giving love without conditions;

nothing held back in fear.

Peace is quite simply

love without limits.

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Hymn

Abide with me

Watch [hymn](#)

Reading

Matthew 25:1-13 (unmute)

Reflection

In this reading we have a strange parable, the Kingdom of God is like ‘ten young women, five wise and five foolish, who fall asleep waiting for the event’. It almost feels back to front, what has this story to do with the Kingdom? URC theologian Susan Durber reflecting on this passage suggests we should resist some of the usual assumptions when reading a parable, ignore the idea that Jesus is the bridegroom, this after all was not an idea around at the time Jesus was telling the story. The people listening to this story at the time would have been familiar with stories that compared wise and foolish actions, there was a story about a King sending out invitations to a feast without specifying a time. How do you respond to such an invitation? The wise it was suggested would get ready and wait for the doors to be opened, but some would take a more cynical approach, thinking it would be a while before anything happened, if it ever happened at all.

This reminds me of some of the comments I have seen on the news recently about people's reaction to Covid 19 and the lockdown in particular. Some people accept that we need to take precautions, to be ready in case we meet the virus, whilst others take the view that it will never happen to them, or it is not as bad as everyone says, and some deny that it exists at all. Susan Durber suggests that this story in Matthew is a story that holds out the hope that a better future really does exist, and it is worth the effort of getting ready now. It favours hope over despair and the clue is in the reference to oil.

Those who repented were anointed with oil and the teachers of Jesus day encouraged daily repentance, as a way of preparing to meet God whenever death occurred. There are those who travel through life slowing down for the speed cameras but travelling recklessly between. Nowadays there are more average speed cameras and I often wonder if some drivers just don't understand the difference. Average speed cameras force us to slow down throughout the danger area, force us to take more care and be ready. If we view daily repentance like a speed camera it won't make much difference to our daily life, but if we take time to reflect on each day and then travel more carefully, it will be a positive force in our lives. Jesus said that the kingdom of God was at hand, it was already here in an incomplete form, so we should be living in readiness and that means living in a way that reflects the joy of the kingdom. This parable is about living life as if each day might be your last, lots of people make bucket lists but never get around to fulfilling their wishes because they leave it too late, think of all those who die in conflict or terror attacks and all those lost promises. I have a good friend whose husband died way too soon but there was no unfulfilled bucket list because they had lived their life to the full, enjoying opportunities as they could rather than putting them off for another day. None of us know when our life in this reality might end, we don't know what is around the corner and Covid 19 has shown us that our idea of being in control is rather foolish. However, rather than putting life on hold and bemoaning our lost time we can take the opportunity to learn new things, to find ways of reconnecting with people, and we can build a better future, we can build the kingdom, we can work for peace through practising love. Perhaps the moral of this story is be wise and dance through life, don't sleepwalk into the future.

Prayers

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

On this day we remember all whose lives have been torn apart by wars, by terrorism and inhumanity, winner and losers, soldiers and civilians, adults and children. We remember Holocaust victims and victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and all the ways in which we allow our inner fears to create barriers between your children. We pray for an end to violence in the world, and the coming of peace.

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

We remember those whose lives have been blighted by the carelessness and the apathy of others, the times we have stepped aside from love and allowed injustice to breed resentment.

We think of children who toil for long hours in awful conditions to make treasures for those who can afford them, and those whose deprivation and desperation feeds our delight. We pray for the courage to resist the temptation to have more than we need and for a love for our world that ends recognises the need for sustainability.

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

We remember those who have endured injustice and untruths and malicious slander; the victims of racial prejudice and faith crimes. We think of all those who feel that they are denied opportunity because of the colour of their skin and recognise that our world is not fair, and often the upholders of law are biased. We pray that we will love one another as brothers and sisters and stand in solidarity with the victims of injustice

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

Lord God, who judges with justice and equity, we pray for the United Nations and peacemakers everywhere. We pray for the charities who bring hope into the lives caught up in violence and those

who support the victims of violence across the world. On this day we pray for the Royal British Legion, and all who care for the wounded and weary. We pray that we will not forget the hidden victims, those whose wounds are not obvious and whose fear prevents them from seeking help.

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

Lord God, who judges with justice and equity, we pray for ourselves and people of faith everywhere, that we might be led to make fewer errors of judgement, and a greater effort to live lives that reflect your love and give a glimpse of your glory. In our daily lives may we always seek the highest option and the most loving action as we follow the way of Jesus, serving others in our oneness with you and all creation.

God of all time and space, may our actions and words bring justice and love

In Jesus name Amen.

Our offering to God.

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Suggested hymn Make me a channel of your peace

Watch [hymn](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.