

Sunday 12th November 2023 – Remembrance Sunday

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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, we worship together in God.

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....

Introduction

As we pause for our annual remembrance of those who gave their lives in service of the United Kingdom during acts of war, we are conscious of the wars happening around us in the world today. In these conflicts, whilst there is no UK armed force presence UK citizens have lost their lives.

Mother Theresa once said a lack of peace happens when we forget we belong together. Fear, distrust and suspicion are fuel factors of war and yet if we believe in the oneness of creation and that we are all held as one within the love that is God then it is our attitudes that need to change.

Music Foreign Sand – Roger Taylor (1994) [Listen here](#)

Remembrance

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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Reading Psalm 78:1-8 ([Living Bible](#))

Reflection 1

Telling stories about our experience is important because in doing so we often discern not only what happened but why things happened. In preparing the story we can often discern what we believe and what we don't believe which is a prompt to move forward in our journeying with God. 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, remembering helps us to make better choices in the future.

We wear a symbol to mark our remembrance, but with time why we wear a poppy may have been lost to younger generations. If they are to learn from the past they need to hear the story that is at the heart of our remembrance.

Poem – [Why I wear a poppy by Don Crawford](#)

Wearing a poppy is part of the act of remembering but also an important part of passing on the story so that future generations learn from the mistakes of the past. Poppies are also a reminder that out of destruction new life can come. Christians believe that as well and we try to make a difference in the world by the way we behave.

Reading Matthew 25:1-13

Reflection 2

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, and 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 and might miss the doors opening, and the celebration.

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. The reference to oil points to repentance. 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 an ordinary 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.

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. There is an advert on television for Cancer Research and in particular Breast Cancer. It features women with stage four breast cancer reflecting on their dreams about the future and what they wish they could achieve with the time left for them. They are very poignant hopes but the last one puzzles me – 'I would tell the people I love what they mean to me'! Now this lady is still alive and really the lesson from this parable is don't wait for a sign live your hope every day. If you watch Strictly you may have see Annabelle Croft dance on Saturday remembering the importance of making the most of the time left after her husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer and the lesson she learnt about living each day as if it were her last.

None of us know when our life in this reality might end, we don't know what is around the corner and the Pandemic taught 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.