

Remembrance Sunday - Matthew 5.1-12

Remembrance Day is a day of silence. Today, eighty years since the end of the second world war, we pause in the midst of our busy lives to remember both those who fought for our freedom and those who maintain the peace we enjoy today.

Remembrance Day is a day of gratitude and grief, but it is also one of responsibility in that we come to reflect on the kind of world that God calls us to build for our modern age. When Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends," He speaks not only of His own sacrifice on the cross but also of a love shed abroad in all our hearts, a selfless love – a love that is both unconditional and sacrificial to others.

The men and women we remember today lived out that love to the full. They stepped forward when others stepped back. They bore the burdens few would have chosen. They endured fear, pain, and loss for the sake of freedom, justice, and peace.

When we see the lines of crosses that stretch across battlefields and memorials, we count the cost and are reminded that the price of peace is our commitment to guard and protect and promote what we hold dear.

And yet, even as we remember the lives lost in service, our world continues like a 'slave to a fool' towards greater division and violence.

There seems to be no end of conflict across the borders of Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, Libya and Iraq, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Afghanistan. These are the areas of conventional unrest we face. Of concern today are the increasing number cyber-attacks between leading nations, looking to undermine social, political and economic stability. As well as there being soldiers on the ground in places of military support, there are today service personnel actively engaged in cyber security – looking to scramble incoming attack. We remember today the men and women who continue to guard and maintain our national security and peaceful borders.

Flying in the face of a world shaped by conflict, Jesus speaks from a mountainside, 'the sermon on the mount', words of 'truth to power';

He speaks truth to us today in a world so much in need of peace and reconciliation. By his actions on the cross, he accepts our forgiveness, in that we have all fallen short. Through faith, duty and repentance, he brings healing to the nations, and he makes for peace.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, He says, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. - To be poor in spirit is to yield to a greater spirit, of God who is able to provide more than we can ever wish for or imagine.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. – As we mourn the fallen, we mourn also the brokenness of a world that resorts to violence and conflict. In our sorrow we pray for healing and for peace

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. - The meek are strong in being gentle and humble before God and each other. – For it is more blessed to serve than to be served.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. - To be righteous is to be in 'right relation to God' in his love, his mercy and in his longing for reconciliation.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. - As we seek Gods' forgiveness, we become free to forgive others.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Although none of us are pure in heart, the prophet Ezekiel prophecies – 'A new heart I will give you, a new spirit will I put within you; and I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh'.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. - To be a child of God is to acknowledge that he is to us a Father. To make for peace is to live by his love.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. - Gods' blessing is upon those who stand up for what is just and true.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil things against you because of me. - People often attack those who speak out what is just and true in the eyes of God. But justice and truth must be spoken all the same.

Remembrance is a day when we pause in the midst of our busy lives to remember in the eyes of God those who fought for our freedom, and we consider the part we play in maintaining our faith – our duty of heart to others.

Steven Wheeler