

Some thoughts on Remembrance Sunday – Reading Matthew chapter 5, verses 1-12:-

It is always right to reflect on the reasons for observing Remembrance Sunday and Day. This becomes a sharper question with the younger generation who find some aspects of the “tradition” unhelpful to say the least! For some “Remembrance Tide” brings back poignant memories of family members or friends and comrades who died in war. But for many of us, those like myself who were born in the 1940s or later, we do not remember a “World War” or a situation where our country has had to face the threat of invasion and the violation of our land, homes and families. However, in many areas world wide, war and the threat of war is a present reality. In their role as peacekeepers and anti- terrorist agents, our armed forces often find themselves in danger and some have died in their effort to succour others.

Remembrance Day (originally Armistice Day) was the anniversary of ‘the day the guns fell silent’ - “*The eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh month*”. The loss of so many lives in World War One was felt in every community in Britain. It is a salutary experience to visit a war memorial in a small village community and think through what it meant for those who remained. Many communities lost between half and three-quarters of their young men. Those who died left behind wives and young families, parents and sweethearts. On many war memorials there is a repeat of losses from the same local families during World War Two. Within a generation, the country was called upon to face another tyranny and again sacrificed so many of its young and capable citizens.

On top of these two world wide conflicts there have been a number of local wars, again leading to loss of life and ongoing grief for the bereaved; these include Gaza and the Sudan. Remember also that there is still war here in Europe between Russia and the Ukraine!

Scripture is open and honest about the reasons for and the results of conflict. Some words from the Epistle of James chapter 4, verses 1-3 are a good summary - “*What causes wars and what causes fightings among you? . . . You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. . . .*”. The Readings set for today can be helpful in shaping our lives as we seek to live together with those different to ourselves.

For Christians there is a future and a hope! An alternative Reading sometimes used as we remember loved ones is Revelation chapter 21, verses 1 – 7. When things look hopeless from a human point of view, it is worth reading that and remembering that in all things the Lord God is sovereign!

So in the “now” of this moment as we stand at a point in time between the past – with its “memories” and its “might have been” and the future with all its possibilities, hopes and fears, we come to remember loved ones, friends and comrades. To pray for peace. To give thanks for the past and to pledge ourselves anew to serve God and our fellow men as we face the future together.

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.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within
her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
He lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

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.

Psalm 46