

Service for Remembrance Sunday at Christchurch on Sunday November 8th, 2020

Introductions and welcome

Good morning and welcome to our service from Christchurch, Hitchin on this Remembrance Sunday. My name is Christine Warren and I am a Methodist Local Preacher in the North Herts Circuit and a member at Christchurch. Helping with this service this morning is Sara who will be reading the scriptures to us , Mike, Mandy and James who will be providing our music not forgetting Rob Bryan who has recorded The Last Post for us and Steve who is dealing with all the technical stuff. My thanks to them all.

So now let us begin our worship

Let us draw near to God

Let us listen to God

Let us open our hearts and be nurtured by the words of eternal life.

As we turn to God remember He is with us in the stories of our lives, in our remembering and our longings and from Him we gain strength to face the future. Amen

Song STF 89

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,

we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,

we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, you reign forever.

Our hope, our strong deliverer.

You are the everlasting God,

The everlasting God.

You do not faint, you won't grow weary.

You're the defender of the weak,

You comfort those in need;

You lift us up on wings like eagles.

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley

Let us pray

Almighty God we come to remember all you have done

Your creative acts, your mighty deeds throughout history, your gift of Christ,

Your love experienced daily in our lives.

Remind us of all we owe you lest we forget.

Almighty God, we come this day to remember and learn, to remember the lessons of the past, the cost of war, the price of peace, the extent of human sacrifice.

As we worship you, help us to learn to live and work for peace, to fight only what is evil and corrupt, to serve and not to count the cost, to give our all in the cause of a better world for we know that you are a God of love. You are our God, at the heart of the people of your world, you hold, you strengthen, you sustain us and for that we give you thanks and praise.

Forgive us that so often and so easily we do forget.

We fail to remember your sovereign transforming power, to remember you in the good times as well as the bad, to see you in the fellowship of your church, to recognise your hand at work every moment of our lives.

Almighty God, through all things you remember us - help us to remember you.

And remind us of all we owe, lest we forget. We ask this prayer in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading John 15:9-14

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

As we move towards 11 am, we come to our time of Remembrance. After we have shared together in a Litany of Remembrance in which there is response for everyone to join in, the Last Post will be played and then we will observe 2 minutes silence.

Litany of Remembrance

In the rising of the sun and its going down.

We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and the chill of winter.

We remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and the warmth of summer.

We remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of autumn.

We remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart

We remember them.

When we have joys we yearned to share.

We remember them.

So long as we live they too will live,

For we shall remember them.

The Last Post

2 minutes silence

And so now as we have remembered let us share in a prayer by Kate Compston, a prayer that challenges us to remember but also to become makers of peace.

In Remembrance of those, throughout time, all over the world, who have died in war, we pray urgently today that children, women and men maybe become makers of peace.

We pray for children growing up in violent surroundings or thinking, talking and playing in war like ways.

We pray too for women who are silent while warfare goes on around them.

God, give to your people a new courage to question accepted dogma and dream about things that make for peace.

We pray too for men brought up to believe that might is manly and for men who think otherwise and so are labelled cowardly and weak.

God, give your people a new determination to struggle for justice and peace.

O God we pray for a new awareness of the battlefield within us, new thought patterns, language and ideas, new appreciation of the world as one community, new attempts to befriend those different from ourselves, new readiness to forgive and reconcile, new

visions , new love, new hope and a new faith that the peace that passes all understanding can reach out within us to embrace the world. Amen

Reading Romans 5 :1-8

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Reflection

To remember is?

On this Remembrance Sunday let us ponder for a few moments on what that question means for us in its fullest sense, on this special day.

Two years ago on the 100th anniversary of the conclusion of the First World War, some very special films were shown on the television. The old grainy black and white pictures of soldiers on the battlefields and then going over the top [films which many of us have seen many times over the years] were treated by a special process to be shown in colour. And what a difference that made. Suddenly you could see the detail as never before, you could see how young most of the soldiers were, you could see the bravado but also the fear in their eyes and then the suffering in the aftermath of the battle. And for many younger people, as well as my generation, the comment was made 'I never realised how awful it was.' This new process had brought these scenes to life and once more, in seeing them, we were urged to remember and not forget. Remembrance Sunday is a festival in our national life, of commemoration, a time when we look back and honour these brave men who throughout the last century and beyond fought in different wars and also keep alive their memory by doing so.

To remember in this way is right and fitting, as it is right and fitting, as Val shared with us last week, on All Saints Day, to remember and honour those men and women who have lived their lives in service and often sacrifice for their fellow human race. Sometimes these were people, as with the war dead, whose names never made the headlines but by their faith and actions touched the lives of others. To remember is to hold to mind and recall what they have done for us.

But surely to remember is more than this. One can remember but it is a bit like just standing still and recalling if that remembering does not urge us to learn and move on for, we need to build on these memories.

I always enjoy watching the TV programme 'Who do you think you are?' So often there is a similar pattern to them whatever the celebrity involved learns about their past history. At first they are inquisitive, then often upset but sometimes shocked by what they learn and towards the end of the programme, that person vows that what they have learned about past family members, will not be forgotten, will be remembered and will also change the way they view life or conduct their lives in the future.

And as followers of Christ, the words of Paul, which Sara read to us from the letter to the Romans, are urging us to remember what God through Christ has done for us and in that remembering to recall what gifts we receive from this act of selfless love, Christ's death on the cross. Let me read again verses 6 to 8. 'You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' The majority of Paul's letter to the Romans is spent on this theme but then we find words in chapter 12 which teach us how to live our lives in the wonderful knowledge of this. We must remember that Paul was writing to a community for whom suffering was a much more an everyday occurrence. Imprisonment, persecution and even death were commonplace. We have been suffering in a different way over the past few months, but Paul's words can speak to both his community and ours. Firstly there is the promise of peace, an inner peace which Jesus talked about to his disciples before he died and this is what he said 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. So do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' This is what a commentary I read recently had to say about Paul's words which say we have peace with God. 'We now have peace with God which may differ from peaceful feelings such as calmness and tranquilly. Peace with God means we are reconciled with him. There is no more hostility between us, no sin blocking our relationship with him. Peace with God is possible only because Jesus paid the price for our sins through his death on the cross.'

This means that we receive God's grace into our lives and as Paul puts it, which we now stand in this grace. I will never forget the comment made by a minister at my church in Guisborough. We were studying this passage in Romans and she pointed out that it says we stand in God's grace. She said this isn't just a little so that we are only able to dip a toe into God's grace, we stand in his grace. 'Imagine' she said 'that it comes above your knees. That is how abundant it is.' God's peace and grace and above all his love which will help to get us through the toughest of times, a love and peace and grace which we receive abundantly to share with others.

As we remember Christ's sacrifice for us, that outpouring of love, then we should, in that remembering, pray for peace and love, we should work for peace and love but we should all live peace and love and this is perhaps the hardest and challenging of these things to do.

For we need to do this in our families, our church community, in our work situations, schools and colleges, in our communities and beyond.

We have watched unfolding on our television screens, the outcome of the presidential election. We have heard words of hate and words of peace and witnessed the difference these words can make. To remember all the sacrifices of past wars is surely to strive for peace in our world where is still so badly needed.

To remember Christ's sacrifice for us is to know his peace and grace and love and to share and show this to others. If we do this we shall as the paraphrase of the Message says 'Find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand, out in the wide open spaces of God's grace and glory , standing tall and shouting our praise.'

So let's put peace into each other's hands.

Song STF 712 Put peace into each other's hands

1. Put peace into each other's hands

And like a treasure hold it,
Protect it like a candle-flame,
With tenderness enfold it.

2. Put peace into each other's hands

With loving expectation;
Be gentle in your words and ways,
In touch with God's creation.

3. Put peace into each other's hands

Like bread we break for sharing;
Look people warmly in the eye:
Our life is meant for caring.

4. Put Christ into each other's hands,

He is love's deepest measure;
In love make peace, give peace a chance,
And share it like a treasure.

Fred Kaan

As we come to our prayers for the people of God's world, if you are wearing a poppy today or have one available, please focus on that.

So we pray to our loving Lord as we focus on the red petals of the poppy.

As we look at these, we think of the many areas in our world when conflicts continue and pray for the victims of that warfare. We pray for families turned into homeless refugees and lands laid waste and barren. We pray too for those who through their beliefs or principles are subject to discrimination, persecution, imprisonment and even death. At this time we pray for any situation that inflames discord or a lack of harmony amongst people remembering especially the tense situation in America following the presidential elections and the strong feelings which have emerged in our society following the announcement of a second lockdown. Loving Lord, give peace, give love among your people.

We look at the black centre of the poppy reminding us of dark and difficult times. And so Lord God, we lift before you any we know who are grieving the loss of a loved one, any who are coping with illness whether being treated in hospital or at home, those feeling especially isolated at this time as we continue in lockdown, remembering especially the older members of our community, those struggling with mental health issues, those concerned about their job prospects. Loving Lord, help us to be aware of those in need, let us pray for them and love and care for them in any way that may be possible for us at this time.

We now look at the green stem of the poppy. If it were growing in a field, this would be the part of the plant that will keep the plant grounded, through which it would receive nourishment. And so we lift before you now all those in our community who help to keep us grounded, help us to live our lives in these limited circumstances. For those working in every part of the NHS, whether dealing with those who have COVID or those who have long term illnesses, for teachers and lecturers who enable our youngsters to continue in education at this time, for care workers whether they are working with elderly or housebound or those with special needs. Keep them strong and healthy Lord, give them energy and stamina to keep them going against all odds. We pray too for those who keep our communities going, refuse collectors, delivery drivers, shop workers, the police. Loving Lord we have much to be grateful for, help us to receive as well as to give.

And finally looking at the green leaf which symbolises new life and future promises. Lord, we may be living through challenging times and the near term future may seem uncertain but help us to remember the full picture, that your Son came to this earth to die for us so that we can be in a full relationship with you, our God. We have peace, we receive your grace and we have the promise of life everlasting with you. So, having the assurance of your promise to us, help us to remember to show love to one another, grateful for what is past and looking with hope to the future. These prayers we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

We join together in the prayer that Jesus taught us saying whatever version you feel comfortable with.

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.

Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom,

the power and the glory are yours.

Now and for ever.

Amen

God of healing and peace, in Christ you reconciled the world to yourself, not counting our sins against us. As new creations in Christ, may we go to witness to your renewing love, to overcome the barriers that divide, to be ambassadors of your reconciling good news.

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more.

Amen

Song STF 470 Lord for the years

1. Lord, for the years Your love has kept and guided,

Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,

Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,

Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

2. Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires us,

Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,

Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,

Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

3. Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4. Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt Him,
Loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without Him,
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

5. Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
Past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith