

Isaiah 10:33-11:9

John 15:9-17

Introduction

This has been a very stressful week for many of us. Many people disagree with the Government's decision to lock down again on what we can do and many people are anxious, angry and upset. Someone asked me the other day, "How are you?" and I jokingly replied, "I'm fine. It's everyone else that is the problem!" That comment is always good for a laughing response but as I reflected on it later I realized that responses like that sow the tiny seeds of conflict and division.

When we stop listening to other people and trying to see things from their point of view, when we think that we are the only ones who are right and everyone else is wrong, when we stop allowing others to express their opinions and dismiss things we don't agree with as 'fake news' then we are sowing the seeds of conflict that can quickly escalate into violence and terror

There has been a great deal of stress and anxiety flying about as we tried to organize the events surrounding Remembrance Day. People were very worried we wouldn't be able to mark it at all and others have been furious at the thought that anyone could be prevented from paying their respect to those who have died to bring us freedom from tyranny and oppression and terror.

Remembrance Day, is a visual reminder of something that is infinitely important. The poppy is our visual reminders of those who fought in two world wars, and who are still affected by wars today.

Today we stop, and remember and give thanks. Memory is a wonderful thing. It can take us back to a past time of happiness and joy or equally can return us to times in our lives of conflict, struggle and sadness. I find that a smell or a sound or a picture has the ability to transport me. Our memories inform our present, they help us to learn from the past and a day like today, when the nation takes time to remember together the cost of war, is vitally important. We must never allow ourselves to forget the human cost of conflict and war.

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I think that the Remembrance Sunday Service is one of the most important services in the Church's calendar, after Christmas and Easter because it helps us not to forget why we have the freedom that we enjoy today.

This time, one hundred years ago we would have been two years into a hard won peace. And it was just over 75 years ago that the Second World War ended. But Remembrance Sunday It is not just a reminder of those who died in the First and Second World Wars - important as they were. It is also a reminder of other conflicts that our armed services have been in - some of which my own father served in and where I was present

The Korean War
The Aden and Malayan Emergencies
The Falkland War
The Cyprus Conflict
The Northern Ireland Police Action
The 1st and 2nd Gulf Wars
The Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts

And it gives us an opportunity to say "Thank you" for the sacrifice that so many made - so that we in the United Kingdom can enjoy peace. It is poignant to remember as we see the cost of war and conflict still going on around us: in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan

It is appropriate too to come to a Christian Church to hold a service of Remembrance because the Church building should remind us of the greatest sacrifice of all. It was really important that although we cannot worship together in church today that this service be held in and broadcast from one of our churches because the Church building should remind us of the greatest sacrifice of all

For in the New Testament we read of the story of God sending his own Son Jesus into the world to bring mankind back into a right relationship with him.

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And to do so Jesus made the Ultimate sacrifice on our behalf on the Cross.

It is the sacrifice that we recall every Easter. For it is more than simply the remembering of the life of a good man. Rather through it, we are reminded how GOD wants us to live

The rules that God has given us for living - are not rules to curtail our enjoyment of life. Quite the contrary – they are given – as Jesus said: so that we may have life and life in abundance (Jn 10:10)

I sometimes talk to children in school about trying to play a game of football with no rules. We realise it would be chaos! So it is with us when we fail to remember the rules of life that God has given us.

Jesus gave us two great rules to govern life in our society, the first was this.

To "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind (Mt 22:37)

The second was to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22:39)

Let us go from this Remembrance Day service resolved to make these commands the goal of our lives.

The American poet George Santayana, once said

"Those who do not learn from history - are doomed to repeat it."

In war many people found their faith –some lost it and others have become an inspiration to us. People like the Nurse Edith Cavell executed by the Germans for trying to smuggle injured British servicemen out of Germany during the first world war, people like Father Maximillian Kolbe who in 1941 in the Auschwitz concentration camp, offered himself as a substitute

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for a starvation punishment for another prisoner who would leave family behind him.

In the starvation pit, the priest never despaired or fell into bitterness. He encouraged the other prisoners until he alone was left alive. Finally, tired of waiting for him to die, the Nazis killed him. **Years later, when Pope John Paul II beatified Father Kolbe, the Jewish man whose place he had taken, was sitting in the audience with his wife, children and grandchildren.**

War can bring the worst out in people but it can also bring the best out of them too.

TODAY let us give thanks to God for the sacrifices THEY all made that has enabled us to remember them today in PEACE