

Service for Remembrance Sunday 14th November 2021

Led by Rev Adele Moorhouse

(the service in church will begin at 10.30am today)

Welcome

Today, on Remembrance Sunday, we remember the horrors of war and we respect and remember those who have died in war. But we also look forward to a day when there will be no more fighting, no more injustice, no more greed, no more hatred – a day when God's kingdom has come.

Originally this commemoration was to honour those who died in the First World War. Over time it has come to include all those who have lost their lives in armed conflict and also those who live with injuries and trauma which they suffer as a consequence of war. So today, we remember things that have happened in the past and commit ourselves once again to working towards a more peaceful world.

In Matthew's gospel 5:9 we are reminded just how much God values those who make peace in the world..... *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.'*

Song

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

*Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all men that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple. Dedicated to Mrs Frances Tracy © 1967 OCP Publications

Prayer

Almighty and amazing God, you are a God of love, peace and compassion and you created a world of beauty, wonder and plenty. You also created us to be in a relationship of love with you and with one another and yet on this day we recognize with sorrow that we have squandered our opportunities and behaved in selfish, careless and foolish ways, causing pain, fear and hurt. We pray that you would forgive us and we thank you for your promise that a day will come when there will be no more fighting, no more pain, or fear, or death. We ask that you would help us to work towards that day when your Kingdom will come. Accept our prayers and praise this morning, loving God, for we offer them in the name of your precious Son Jesus. Amen

Bible reading Romans 8:31-35,37-39 NIV

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Talk

As we remember events that happened many years ago and bring to mind conflicts long since past, we realise that the peace that was fought for seems a long way off and that conflict continues to be all too common in our world. Wars and conflicts continue to claim many thousands of lives each year. The Afghanistan conflict has resulted in over 41,000 fatalities this year alone (probably 1.5 - 2 million since it began in 1978) and this is just one of many ongoing situations that are all stark reminders of the tensions which continue to scar our world. And so we realise that many of the driving forces which resulted in the conflicts we explicitly remember today, are still around even now.

So what do we make of Paul's words in the passage we have just heard? He speaks of hardship, persecution, peril, sword ... and says 'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us'. For the early Christians who would read and hear these words, the concept of being a conqueror must have been very alien to them, after all they were located in imperial Rome, where Christians were fed to the lions as sport. Under such military power they must have found it almost impossible to feel like conquerors in any sense of the word, and yet Paul assures them that they are conquerors through Jesus Christ, because through him nothing at all can separate them from God's love.

Today also, those who experience war and conflict, especially those who have lost loved ones, will find it hard to see themselves as conquerors, in fact survivors may seem like a more appropriate term as they try to piece their lives back together. And yet they too can be assured that no matter how tough things are, how hopeless they may seem, no military force on earth, nor any other situation, has the power to separate us from God's unfailing love.

It is incredibly difficult though to remember that, and to recognise God's love and his eternal plan, when the world is for so many such a terrifying, painful, and uncertain place. The Christians who Paul was writing to in Rome would have had their doubts as would many who experienced the World Wars and other hostilities which still continue. So where is God in all of this? Who really is in control?

Paul's message in the letter to the Romans is quite clear.

God is in control, and through Jesus we become more than conquerors; more than the great Roman military rulers; more than the world's super powers; and all this because the victory and glory is in, and through, Christ who has overcome the world and all that is going on in it, through His death and resurrection.

In overcoming sin through Jesus, God demonstrated that his love was, and is, more powerful than anything else, and that nothing can separate us from that love. The question then, is 'Why does God not prevent wars?' Although it is easy for us to point the finger at God, in reality the responsibility lies with people who have chosen to ignore his ways of peace and justice. No-one is compelled to be guided by love, and individuals and governments are all too likely to pursue self-seeking goals and agendas, using force to gain power and control over others.

But what about us? We are reminded today of how easy it is to speak of peace, and how difficult it is to pursue it; how straightforward it sounds to talk of breaking down barriers, yet how demanding it is actually to live as peacemakers. Yet we are reminded also that this is what God wants from us, and what God makes possible for us - to live in such a way that we would heal wounds rather than create them; that we would unite rather than divide; that we would reconcile rather than separate.

May the peace we pray for begin here and now in our hearts and so may we, empowered by his love, be instruments of God's peace, helping to bringing healing to our broken world.

Prayers

Lord God, we believe that you are present as we pray, and that the inmost thoughts of our hearts are known to you. And so we bring those thoughts to you now, holding before you those we know and care about and who need particularly at this time to feel your healing touch and to be reminded that you love them beyond their imagining.

Today we pray particularly for the family of Emma Breckons who died earlier this week. We thank you for Emma and for the valuable part she has played over many years in the life of St John's.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

This time of remembrance so often reawakens the pain of having lost someone we love and so we pray for one another, asking for your comfort and your strength and your peace as our memories unfold.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Lord hear us now as we pray for the victims of war, and for peace in our world. We pray for those across the world who bear the scars of conflict and who have lost people they love. We pray for those left homeless or as refugees, for those who have lost their livelihoods and security, and those who still live in daily fear for their lives.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for those in the armed forces, charged with keeping the peace in countries across the world. We pray for world leaders and rulers, politicians and diplomats, those whose decisions and negotiations affect the lives of so many, and in whose hands lies the possibility of peace.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Lord of all, give wisdom to all who work for peace, so that a more secure future may be ensured for all. Give courage to those who strive for justice, so that the causes of conflict may be overcome. Give strength to those who seek to break down barriers, that divisions over race, colour, creed and culture may be ended. Grant that wherever war, or the threat

of war, continues to haunt lives, a way of reconciliation may be found, and harmony established between people and nations.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ the prince of peace. Amen

Poem

We pray for peace,
but not the easy peace
built on complacency
and not the truth of God.
We pray for real peace,
the peace God's love alone can seal.

We pray for peace,
but not the cruel peace,
leaving God's poor bereft
and dying in distress,
we pray for real peace,
enriching all the human race.

We pray for peace,
and not the evil peace,
defending unjust laws
and nursing prejudice,
but for the real peace
of justice, mercy, truth and love.

We pray for peace:
holy communion
with Christ our risen Lord
and every living thing;
God's will fulfilled on earth
and all his creatures reconciled.

We pray for peace,
and for the sake of peace,
look to the risen Christ
who gives the grace we need,
to serve the cause of peace
and make our own self-sacrifice.

God, give us peace:
if you withdraw your love,
there is no peace for us
nor any hope of it.
With you to lead us on,
through death or tumult, peace will come.

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Act of Remembrance

Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping:
those who have died for their country in war
those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure;
and all who have lived and died in the service of humankind.
They shall grow not old as we that 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.

We will remember them

Silence.

Almighty and eternal God, from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted, either by death or life: Hear our prayers and thanksgivings for all those we remember this day; fulfil in them the purpose of your love; and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy; though Christ our Lord. **Amen**

We can never explain fully the suffering of wars, but it's right to remember those who suffered and died as a result of them and to hold fast to the belief that when our memory of them causes us to strive for peace then they did not die in vain. It is right also to remember that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and no darkness can overcome that light, and also to remember that we are called to shed that light in the world today.

Song

Into the darkness of this world,
Into the shadows of the night;
Into this loveless place you came,
Lightened our burdens, eased our pain,
And made these hearts your home.
Into the darkness once again -
O come, Lord Jesus, come.
*Come with your love to make us whole,
Come with your light to lead us on,
Driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,
Into these heavy hearts of stone,
Shine on us now your piercing light,
Order our lives and souls aright,
By grace and love unknown,
Until in you our hearts unite -
O Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come with your love...

O Holy child, Emmanuel,
Hope of the ages, God with us,
Visit again this broken place,
Till all the earth declares your praise
And your great mercies own.
Now let your love be born in us,
O Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come in your glory, take your place,

*Jesus, the name above all names,
We long to see you face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Maggi Dawn © 1993 Thankyou Music

Blessing

Go from here in the power of God's Holy Spirit. Wherever there is sorrow, fear, or need, reach out in the name of Christ, and may his joy and peace, his healing and compassion be found in you. May we all know the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ the prince of peace today and every day. **Amen**

The Kohima Epitaph

When you go home tell them of us and say:
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today'.