

Remembrance Sunday – 8 November 2020

Theme: Remembrance, Peace and Reconciliation.

Welcome and Gathering

This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Lamentations 3.21-23

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46.1 We meet in the presence of God. We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace. We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror. We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

We turn our hearts to God as we confess our sins together....

Confession

God of peace,
Forgive us when we have participated
in that which turns people against each other;
as individuals and as a nation

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

for fuelling anger and harbouring vengeance,
for not listening to your call to love one another.
For not taking the opportunity to pass your peace to others.

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

Inspire us never to give up on the hope
that your life offers us,
and the courage to see past war and desolation,
Inspire us to plant seeds of forgiveness and love that will grow,
so that the lion and the lamb will indeed lie down together,
God of healing, we bring you our brokenness.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Song:

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

sung by St Martin's Voices

1. Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

2. In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

3. Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

4. Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Song: Abide with me (played during the laying of the wreaths)

1. Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, O abide with me

2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me

3. I need thy presence every passing hour
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's
power?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide
with me

4. I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

5. Hold thou thy cross before my closing
eyes
Shine through the gloom, and point me to
the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain
shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me

Reading: John 15: 9-17-

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 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. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I

have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Homily

Amos 5:24 “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Reading: Amos 5: 18-24

The Day of the Lord a Dark Day

¹⁸ Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord! why do you want the day of the Lord? It is darkness, not light; ¹⁹ as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. ²⁰ Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹ I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²² Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. ²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. ²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Not the Nine O'clock News Sketch – the two politicians arguing vigorously and saying uncomplimentary things about each other... Sudden heart attack – and without flinching the other one morphs from slanderous attack to heartfelt tribute!

US Elections – outcome uncertain – but hard to believe that such a change of narrative is likely...

UK – Lockdown 2 – sense of frustration that it could have been different... and of course this has all come on top of the on-going and fast-approaching Brexit fall-out. Healing divisions is not going to be simple...

Remembrance Sunday – What’s it for?? This year is the this consecutive year of it marking a centenary... 2018 – the end of the War, 2019 – the first Armistice Day and this year the centenary of the unveiling of the Cenotaph in Whitehall – scene this year of scaled down acts of national remembrance, just as our local events will be different...

The prophet Amos is quite clear in outlining what days like this are not for! As the voice of God, the prophet lambasts the people for the way in which their festivals have missed the point – glorying in their sense of being special and blessed – while alongside them the poor are exploited and denied access to justice... In effect he says that the denial of justice is a denial of their claim to special status – God’s disapproval, not approval is their’s...

So today, far from glorying in war is a day for reflecting that war must always be the last resort, and remembering the victims on all sides is a recognition of the failures which meant that the last resort was the only one open... I remember the controversies over the events after the Falklands War, where the Church and the PM saw things differently in the mood being set and in the images being portrayed... (trying to hide the wounded from the sight of the cameras...)

- Remembering is important (c.f. Early Dementia fears...)
- Remembrance must be real... (c.f. checking out the story we tell ourselves – as true about war as it is about Black History, Women’s history...) TV Documentary on the Armistice – made clear how it planted the seeds of Nazism and the Second World War...
- Remembrance can be personal... and so we must always have a sense of where others are at...
 - 2018 Strensall War Memorial and Plaque stories... TBNT initiative is about remembering the people behind the statistics...
 - Scars... a God given gift to help remember the pain, a reminder of healing but not of wiping out the injuries...
 - John 15 text re laying down of life... Jesus is speaking about himself – and somewhat unwittingly he has offered an image of sacrificial love taken to its logical/illogical conclusion...

Remembrance can be powerful... done properly

- Anamnesis – the word used in 1 Cor 11. Defies translation but has the meaning of remembering – putting things together again or representing them with the effect of making their original power present again... That is at the heart of our Communion liturgies... That's what Amos is pushing for in all religious celebrations – reflecting where we are now against and alongside what we know and understand about the will and purposes of God... “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

But Remembrance can be pointless... unless it applies to today. The goal of remembrance has to be reconciliation... Signing the peace treaty is only ever the first step...

Archbishop Justin Welby – early Ministry in Coventry... Ministry of reconciliation... The 6 R's of Reconciliation...

- Researching - to demythologise a conflict
 - what is the real issue
 - becoming involved, not just an observer
- Relating - it is relational
 - It is affective... it affects you and involves relationships with some unexpected people...
- Relief -Defusing a situation...
 - Helping people be in a place where they can engage with the future
- Risk
 - Incarnation – a huge risk!
 - Getting involved is costly and may fail...
- Reconciling
 - It is a process... it will require changed attitudes...
 - NT word... the promise of a new creation...
- Resourcing
 - Outsiders cannot do reconciliation – ultimately only those directly involved can live it... but support and resource from outside can be helpful...

I think Amos would agree with that! And outside of war situations those processes make sense in beginning the move from name calling and foghorn diplomacy...

The use of 'other' as a verb entered our vocabulary just a few years ago, and our dictionaries even more recently. Othering is an ugly word, but then the process is not particularly nice either

– and although the word is new, it's been a human characteristic for ever... It can be as simple as speaking of a group of people as 'them', or even using the definite article 'the' in front of a group... It lies at the heart of anti-semitism both in the iconography of the medieval Church and in the rhetoric of naziism, it gives rise to ageism, sexism and homophobia, and tragically it has become part of the everyday public discourse in our fractious and divided society...

In John 15, we're reminded of God's response to 'othering' when Jesus says in v12, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.' and in v15, 'I do not call you servants any longer... but I have called you friends...'

The Incarnation – the ultimate enactment of reconciliation in effect has God “de-othering” things... Atonement, or as some like to write it, At-one-ment... Amos' dream of justice rolling and righteousness flowing requires that willingness to identify the imbalances and the distances which exist and to work to address them – the Jubilee principle puts that into action...

100 years ago this week the Cenotaph was unveiled in Whitehall – not simply as somewhere to meet on or around November 11th to lay wreaths – but as a scar – a daily reminder of the cost of 'othering' to such an extent that war become the only option, and a reminder that Amos' dream from more than two and a half millennia ago will not come about by accident, but only when we commit ourselves to be agents of reconciliation and to seek justice for all.

Intercessions

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict,
and ask that God may give us peace:
for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war,
each one remembered by and known to God;
may God give peace. God give peace.

For those who love them in death as in life,
offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;
may God give peace. God give peace.

For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day,
remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;
may God give peace. God give peace.

For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror,
calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity;
may God give peace. God give peace.

For peacemakers and peacekeepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; may God
give peace. God give peace.

For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership,
political, military and religious;
asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace;
may God give peace. God give peace.
O God of truth and justice,
we hold before you those whose memory we cherish,
and those whose names we will never know.
Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world,
and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.
As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future;
for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. Amen.

A prayer for World peace

O God of the nations,
as we look to that day when you will gather people
from north and south, east and west,
into the unity of your peaceable Kingdom,
guide with your just and gentle wisdom all who take counsel
for the nations of the world,
that all your people may spend their days in security, freedom, and peace,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

And so let us say together the prayer Jesus taught us

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those that 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.**

Prayer leading into Laudate Dominum, names of the war dead and memories from residents of Grimston Court:

Ever-living God

we remember those whom you have gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence;

may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples, and establish harmony among the nations,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

We will now hear the words of the Kohima epitaph and see the names of the fallen from across the Benefice. This will be accompanied by music from Laudate. If you would like to observe a 2 minute silence please mute your video after the epitaph, until the names are complete.

**When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say,
For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today.**

Final Blessing

As we come to the close of our Remembrance service, let us commit ourselves to responsible, living and faithful service. Will you strive for all that makes for peace?

We will

Will you seek to heal the wounds of war?

We will

Will you work for a just future for all humanity?

We will

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us that have not yet been cast out by love:

May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people,

And live lives of justice, courage and mercy;

through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer.

Amen

And now let us ask for God's blessing.

God grant to the living grace,

to the departed rest,

to all people unity, peace and concord,

and to us and all God's servants, life everlasting.

**And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all
and remain with you always**

Go in the peace of Christ