

Worship at Home: Sunday 12th November 2023 with Deacon Richard Beckett

Call to worship:

Lord, you have loved us with a love beyond our understanding. As we celebrate this love and Jesus' sacrifice for us, may your vision of peace for your world begin to take shape in our hearts and minds. Amen

StF 131 By a monument of marble

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iz8GyD78Yns

By a monument of marble, or a simple wooden cross.
Here we gather to remember, sacrifice and tragic loss.
Blood red poppy petals flutter, each a symbol for a life,
Drifting in a crimson curtain, shadow of a constant strife.

Solemn silence now surrounds us. As we stand in memory.

Why must factions stir up conflict?

This eternal mystery, troubles hearts and stirs the conscience,
urges us to think again; face the curse of confrontation,
yet reduce the searing pain.

For the sound of war still thunders, through the planet, on this day.

Every hour new victims suffer, even as we meet to pray.

God, we need your help and guidance, in our constant search for peace.

Move us on to new solutions, as we pray that wars may cease.

Prayer of confession:

We have come together into your presence, Lord,
to worship and adore you, to praise your holy name and to marvel at your
deeds.

We have come before you to confess our weakness and folly, past and
present, as individuals and as a nation,

as citizens of the world and as citizens of your kingdom of love.

We hear and receive God's forgiveness. Amen.

Bible reading: John 15:9-17

Time to reflect:

I want to talk about my Dad for a moment and his part in the 2nd world war. He flew in Whitley Bombers as a navigator and gunner in the first part of the war and when his plane crashed over France with other

members of the crew, he parachuted to safety but was eventually captured and imprisoned in numerous prisoner of war camps for the remaining four years of the war.

During some of this time he put his artwork skills to use forging documents for escaping prisoners. After the war this risky work was recognised and his name was mentioned in despatches. He rarely talked about his experiences with the exception of the time he recorded a tape for my niece's school project and we discovered a lot of what had happened.

Dad never glorified the events but also, I suspect saved us from some of the graphic details by joking that, where many people were awarded medals for bravery, he was awarded for forgery!

I tell you this because, while he did not 'give his life' (He lived to the age of 94 in fact) I suspect he gave a part of himself which was lost for ever.

The Bible verse came to mind as I thought about Dad and all those whose lives were lost and have been since in wars and conflict.

"The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them".

It is really important though that we keep this verse in its context and remember that it is Jesus referring to his death on the cross.

Jesus' love for his disciples (his friends in this case) is the same as God's love for his Son Jesus.

Inexplicably perhaps, there is also 'Joy' in this passage (verse 11) "My joy will be found in you'. While Jesus lays down his life for his friends, he does not expect them to be carrying a burden of guilt about this but actually it is something which ultimately will bring joy!

The joy of Jesus is something which arises from a piece of work being completed, like the joy of an artist. Jesus' message here is that the Christian life is not a shallow following of a traditional pattern. It is a life characterised by the power of fresh creation.

Someone once said that the love that dies for enemies is greater still than the love that dies for friends. But that is not before us here in this passage. Of course, Jesus did die for his enemies too (Romans 5:10)

It was once said that: “Love has sunk below its proper level if it begins to ask, who is my friend and who is my enemy”. Jesus’ love gives everything for all people.

We need to hear that message for ourselves: Jesus speaks here to his disciples on a very personal level: “My love for you is so great that I give my life for you”.

Sometimes in our worship and church life, we are so focussed on giving *our* lives, *our* time, *our* resources, that we forget the gift Jesus gave of his life for us and it is that we hold on to without any sense of guilt or burden.

This is the love which sacrifices all and does not seek retaliation and we hear all of this within the context of Remembrance Sunday.

I am a dreamer – (perhaps we all should try to be sometimes) try writing some lines for yourself after this statement: “I dream of a world in which.....” I’ll start you off with a suggestion: “I dream of a world in which **relationship** will replace **retaliation**”. (Notice how similar those two words are)

On the wall of my Mum and Dad’s house was pinned some of Dad’s calligraphy – I guess he was a dreamer too. But it is a dream which requires sacrifice and self-giving. These were the (unattributed) words he wrote:

“If there be true love in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in each nation there will be peace in the world.”

A prayer of intercession:

Lord God, on this day when we remember the fallen of countless wars, call all the nations to repentance, move in the hearts of tyrants and terrorists, move in the hearts of the leaders of the nations, move in the hearts of those who stir up hatred and division.

Lord God, as we move forward into this new week, lead us in your ways of justice, mercy and truth.

Enable us to walk in peace and love, one with the other and encourage us by your word, your presence and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live by the values you expect of citizens of your kingdom. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer (in whatever version you prefer)

StF 712 Put peace into each other's hands

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VI_sd5A-h8

Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it.

Protect it like a candle flame
with tenderness enfold it.

Put peace into each other's hands,
with loving expectation;

Be gentle in your word and ways,
in touch with God's creation.

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.

As at communion, shape your hands
into a waiting cradle;

the gift of Christ receive, revere,
united round his table.

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.

Closing Prayer

Receive the peace of God, the love of Jesus and the refreshing wind of
the Holy Spirit.

Give of yourself through words which speak of peace, lives which
exemplify peace and acts which create eternal peace amongst neighbour,
friends and family. Amen

(Some Prayers adapted from Roots Resources)