

Remembrance Day

Good Morning Church Family,

Well, as someone said to me last Sunday this is a bit like déjà vu, having come back from the second half of my sabbatical, straight into lockdown. It was good to see people at church last week as Ali and I returned from sabbatical, but yes, I do share the frustration that many of you feel in having to go into lockdown again.

That said, we need to remember who is in control of the events around the world. I do not mean Boris, or the President elect of the US, I mean the one who sustains us and never leaves us, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today is Remembrance Sunday

Prayer

Almighty Father, you call your children to live as brothers and sisters in love and harmony, and have given your Son to be our Saviour, Prince of Peace; grant that we, who are called by His name, may yield our lives to your service, and strive for reconciliation, understanding, and peace in all our relationships; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A poem by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row, that marked our place; and in the sky the larks, still bravely singing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago, we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, Loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe: To you from falling hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high. If we break faith with us who die We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields.

I have always found this poem moving.

A few years ago, Ali and I went to Ypres in Belgium to see the First World War battlefields and the graves of many soldiers buried there, from both sides of the battle lines. I remember it was profoundly silent, an eerie quietness lay like a thick heavy blanket over the whole area, and you could almost smell the stench of death in the air even after all these years.

Many of the graves we saw had the inscription 'unnamed soldier' and their age, written on a simple wooden cross; some as young as 14 years of age. It brings it home to you the

courage that these men and boys had to fight for their country on the front line, on both sides.

Let us remember then those Men, Women and Children that fought, and continue to fight so bravely for our freedom.

Let us also remember our NHS and frontline workers in this time of pandemic. That we too can do our bit to keep them safe as we follow the new lockdown rules.

Prayer

God of hosts, yours is the battle against evil, yours is the victory over death. We come to you with memories of war and death, with scars of victory and defeat.

By your Son Jesus, who bears the scars of His victory won not for Himself but for others, grant us this day healing from the past, and resolution for the future.

So may your world discover and know that peace which is your purpose for all; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Last week in church, I mentioned two books that I have/am reading whilst on sabbatical.

How to Pray by Pete Greig and **Total Forgiveness** by R.T. Kendall (I'm halfway through this book)

Both books talk about the Lord's Prayer and how and why, Jesus gave it to us as a model to help us engage with the Father.

One of the things that struck me whilst reading these books, is how 'flippantly' I say the Lord's Prayer at times. Maybe 'flippantly' is not the right word, but how 'matter a fact' I say it at times, because I have said it so often in the past. It has become familiar, and like all familiar things, sometimes when we do not take care of it, we lose all meaning and how valuable it really is.

Please indulge me. On one day I sat down and just said the Lord's Prayer over and over line by line, realising again how amazing our God really is. **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.** The Lord of the universe and yet our Father. How amazing is that?

Look out on any clear night (without the light pollution) and look at the stars. That is the work of our Father in heaven. 'Hallow be your name' simply means to honour God's holy name. Just that first line should make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Our God in heaven, put every star in place for us to look at and marvel at His holiness.

He is a God of immense power and strength who has built multiple universes for us to gaze upon, and yet He is pure Love. Let us just stop and take note of that for a moment, what does that mean to you personally?

God put the sun far enough away not to burn us but close enough to keep us warm, died on the cross for you and me, just because He loves us.

Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This really struck me. I really need to think what this means for me and us as a church. As you say these words what does it mean to you? In Luke 22:44 – Jesus prayed, **‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done’**

I am thinking that I do not pray this section with much passion. Jesus prayed with passion; His sweat was like drops of blood. I am not suggesting that I/we pray until we bleed, but I do think we need to be praying with more passion than I/we do.

Four people were at the last prayer meeting.

Do not misunderstand me, I am not pointing the finger, but I hope you can see my point. If we do not pray, God will not do!

On this Remembrance Sunday, when was the last time you said the Lord’s Prayer? If it is a prayer you say on a regular basis, Praise God! But do not allow it to become ‘just another prayer’. If you find it difficult to pray, may I encourage you to start with the Lord’s Prayer.

If you struggle remembering it, you can find it in Matthew 6:9.

As a leadership team we discussed how we could get the church praying. Could I ask you, when you pray, whatever time that maybe for you, (please if you can keep to the same time every day) to pray the Lord’s Prayer and be specific in your prayer.

For example, in asking God ‘what do we do with the big church building’ then say the Lord’s prayer. In asking for finances, say the Lord’s Prayer. Getting rid of Covid – 19, say the Lord’s prayer.

As you pray, and you feel that God is speaking to you, write it down and let us know please.

I will expand on the rest of the Lord’s Prayer next week.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bring you Peace at this time.

Blessings

Mike