

Remembrance Sunday 12th Nov 17

Place: Wimbledon War Memorial

Theme: Remembering Matt 5.1-11

- ◆ What are we remembering today and why? None of us lived through the first world war, but we share a collective memory of it and we have remembered more as we have gone through commemorating the Centenaries that have come since 2014. This time next year we will be remembering the 100th Anniversary of the end of the war. Sadly not the war to end all wars.
- ◆ Some of us here today will be remembering loved ones who did serve in that terrible war and may remember their stories, or perhaps more likely their silences.
- ◆ Perhaps the reason why the first world war still holds such a strong place in our memory is because it was the first time we saw the full impact of industrialised warfare and the terrible scale of slaughter that our knowledge, technology and modernity made possible.
- ◆ As well as remembering that we also need to remember what has happened since. A second world war and the development of the atom bomb, further enhancing our capacity for mass slaughter.
- ◆ The scale and drama of these two world wars, their impact on every family in the land make

them very memorable, but there is more that we need to remember today too.

- ◆ We also need to remember the thousands of British Service Men and Women who have died in British Campaigns since 1945. British lives have been lost in 25 different conflicts since the end of World War 2. Many of us will know those who carry the scars of those wars. Some of us are remembering friends and family who were lost in one of those campaigns this morning.
- ◆ When we reflect on those losses we need to remember that while the scale was smaller, for each individual the loss was complete and for each family the loss was as great as in any world war.
- ◆ From Northern Ireland to Malaya, from the Falkland Islands through Africa and the Middle East young lives have continued to be lost or severely damaged on our behalf. Families have continued to be torn apart.
- ◆ We are also remembering the civilians who have died in war and the many places of conflict around the world today. In the last year over 10,000 people have died in each of in Afghanistan, the Mexican Drug War, the Syrian Civil War and Iraq.
- ◆ A further ten conflicts across the globe have each claimed between 1,000 and 10,000 lives this year and 19 conflicts have claimed between 100 and 1000 deaths this year.

- ◆ We also remember the cost of war to the planet and the communities where battles are fought. War now poisons the earth, nuclear war poisons the air we breathe. Thousands are made refugees by violence that makes life impossible for them.
- ◆ This is what we remember. We remember both those dear to us who gave so much and the courage and self-sacrifice of so many and we remember not to take peace for granted and how much violence there is across the world. We remember the glory, the tragedy and the sin of human kind.
- ◆ We remember because remembering reminds us who we are and what it is to be human at its best and at its worst. We are reminded of the courage, the sacrifice and the best of what human beings are; these things are often only apparent in the crucible of war. We give thanks for those who sacrificed their lives, their health and their youth for us.
- ◆ We also remember that our skills, our knowledge and understanding can not only bring us great benefits but also cause terrible harm. Those industrial methods of slaughter first used in world war one and two are still with us.
- ◆ Gas has been used on civilians in Syria. North Korea and America are currently at logger heads both threatening each other with nuclear weapons. We need to remember what such

weapons do. We need to recognise the cost of war to both people and the planet.

- ◆ As we remember the evil of ISIS in the middle east today and of the Nazi's in Germany it seems that sometimes only war can resist such evil, yet we also need to remember that the resistance of war comes at a very great price to young lives, to whole communities. It is only in remembering all this that we can hope to make wise and prudent decisions about war and peace. We also need to remember the limits of what war can achieve.
- ◆ As we reflect on conflict past and present we are also reminded of how fragile peace is and how easily it is broken. We should not take it for granted, but rather learn the lessons of history and try to avoid making the same mistakes. We also need to give thanks for the peace we enjoy and consider how we can contribute to peace making and peace building.
- ◆ Individually we may not be able to do anything to influence what happens overseas, but we can try and build peace here and now in Wimbledon. This year we have seen several terrorist attacks in our nation and our city. One coming very close to home here in Wimbledon.
- ◆ How can we respond to the threat of terror? How do we respond to those who are our neighbours and our enemies? What does it mean to be a peacemaker in Wimbledon today? How do we

follow Jesus command to pray for our enemies and love those who persecute us? Our remembering needs to have practical, concrete consequences for our life together today.

- ◆ So let us remember and reflect on both the best and the worst of humanity revealed in war. Let us give thanks for those who sacrificed everything for us and let us pray for the peace of the world and seek peace and pursue it wherever we can.