

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit

SERVICE AT HOME: 14th November 2021 Remembrance Sunday.

Preparation

Please take a moment to be silent, and to be present with God in your own way, bearing in mind it is Remembrance Sunday.

Call to Worship

On this day of remembering we come to sing and to pray.

On this day we remember guns once fell silent.

On this day of hope in the face of terror, we beseech you, O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, to open our eyes and the eyes of the nations to find a different path through the disagreements of life in this world. In this time of story, song, and prayer, may we be re-committed to being people of Peace, true peace. May we today catch a vision of how the world could live together. **Amen**

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

O God, Our Help in Ages Past (StF 132)

<https://youtu.be/vtzDNns856Y>

1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home;

2 Under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure.
Sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away.

We fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Loving and faithful God,
we come into your presence rejoicing.
We come to sing your praise.
we come to hear your words of power,
we come to share your all-embracing love.

Be present with us in this time together as we
come to worship you.

Called to be your people,
called to walk the way of Jesus,
we come with the offering of ourselves
and seeking your words of comfort and challenge.

Living Jesus, we praise you because you show us
that God is love:

love which reaches to all people;
love which does not count the cost of loving;
love which never ends.

Forgive us when we love ourselves and not you.

Let us confess to God the sins of the world; its
pride, its selfishness, its greed, its evil divisions
and hatreds.

Let us confess our share in what is wrong, and
our failure to seek and establish the Peace that
God wills for creation.

Help us to do what is right for our own
neighbourhoods and for the wider world and all
its people.

We know we have fallen short - and we know
that Jesus made his ultimate sacrifice for us to be
forgiven, so that we can go and do what is right.

Amen

Read Hebrews 10: 11-14, 19-25.

Read Mark 13: 1-8

Reflection 903 words.

Mark tells us Jesus is foretelling the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which actually happened in 70CE, so getting on for 40 years after this conversation took place. Then he predicts nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom.

Well that happened twice in the last century, as you will be well aware. The First World War was billed as the war to end all wars, but it didn't. The Second World War eclipsed it in every respect. Death and destruction, as happened in every war earlier, has happened in every war since, and still happens today in so many parts of the world, just as foreseen in those words from Mark.



I have used family photos in Remembrance Day Services before, the one of my great grandparents seated with two of their five sons standing between them - my Grandad, on the right, a Grenadier Guard who was a stretcher bearer and injured at the battle of Loos in 1915. The man on the other end of the stretcher died, as did the patient on the stretcher. Grandad was brought home, recovered, was invalided out of the army and told he might have 6 months to live if he got an outdoor job. Luckily for me, he lived to the ripe old age of 82. He had, luckily for me, married one of the staff who looked after him during his convalescence at Hodnet Hall in

Shropshire and worked his whole life as a gardener, and eventually teaching Horticulture, at the National Children's Home in Harpenden.

Great Uncle Arthur was shot through the head and left for dead overnight until he was heard moaning the next morning. His brain was untouched by the bullet and he survived - albeit permanently having to wear a bandage because the wounds never healed completely. However, he lived a fairly normal life and died in 1959. Although I was only 6 when he died, I remember him and his black leather bandage distinctly.

Herbert Howard was not so lucky. He was the brother who didn't come back, his name is on the memorial wall at Arras along with tens of thousands of others who were lost but their remains never identified - 34,795 servicemen from just the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died between the spring of 1916 and 7 August 1918. Americans and Canadians are remembered elsewhere. We found Herbert's name on that wall and the name of a member of my wife's family as well.

With the two who came back, I always wonder if they came back through the huge hospital at Netley, where the Royal Victoria Country Park is now. It's a fascinating place, and it has its own cemetery, which is in itself a special and humbling place. Talking of 'not coming back', going round that cemetery at Netley, you will see small clusters of graves here and there where soldiers of other nationalities are buried. I first noticed some Belgian flags on headstones, and then came across some German ones, each one bearing the words 'Ein unbekannter Soldat' - an unknown soldier, the equivalent of Herbert Howard.

Now just think of that - enemy soldiers wounded in France, picked up by English stretcher bearers, just like my Grandad, treated in a field hospital in France or Belgium or wherever, brought back to England to be looked after in an English Hospital by caring doctors and nurses, and dying without anyone ever having found out who they were.

How immensely sad. Their parents and families, just like my great grandparents, just not knowing – not knowing. Again, how immensely sad.

I have a habit of using the words of popular songs in worship, and a simple one for today is a song from an American singer – Edwin Starr – in 1969. It was about Vietnam, but it was as relevant in 1918 as it is today: “War, what is it good for? Absolutely Nothing!”

But is war sometimes necessary? Awful though it is. The First World War famously is something that the world drifted in to because nobody had the gumption to call a halt to a silly state of affairs. The Second World War was different, very different. There was real evil to combat. We all now know of the horrors that went on in places like Auschwitz and Belsen, although there are still those who would deny the truth of the Holocaust.

I remember a few years ago having a conversation with a colleague – a Baptist Minister – where we agreed that we could not in every circumstance ‘turn the other cheek’ and uphold pacifism. If, for example, a member of your own family is threatened? Or at the other end of the scale if a malevolent power is actively working towards wiping out whole sections of the population?

My dad was there in the Second World War, in the Signals as a wireless operator, intercepting German coded transmissions which, as far as he must have been concerned, were total gibberish. Accuracy was key as a contribution to the whole code-breaking effort. So he was ensconced relatively safely in Harpenden for two and a half years with his radio. It’s where he met my Mum, so again, without the war, I wouldn’t be here.

But after D-Day, he did go to France, complete with radio, and he joked that he was quite happy about that because if the enemy got within 5 miles he had to pick it up and run – it was that valuable.

He didn’t talk much about the war – wasn’t allowed to because of the Official Secrets Act – but two things I do remember him saying: He talked of going through Cologne, which was just “two piles of rubble on the side of the road” – echoes of the Destruction of the Temple. He also spoke once of being detailed, in Berlin after the war, to deal with the bodies of Germans who had been lynched by other Germans because of what they did during the war.

My Grandad and my Dad had very differing attitudes after their wartime experiences. I can remember being shocked as a boy (I didn’t show it) hearing my Grandad say “The only good German is a dead German”, although hearing some of his other reminiscences, I can understand why. My Dad, on the other hand, went to evening classes in the 1960s to learn first French and then German. He was good at both, and inspired me to study languages at University.

“War, huh, yeah, what is it good for? Absolutely Nothing!” The reading from Hebrews reminds us of Jesus’s “Single Sacrifice for Sins”. It calls us to ‘consider how we might provoke each other to love and good deeds’. This is as true on an international scale, perhaps, as on a personal scale. It’s partly what the COP26 conference in Glasgow is about, let’s face it. It’s partly what the ‘First World’s’ response to Covid19 and supporting poorer countries who cannot afford vaccines is all about.

We can make the world a better place

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

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 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 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 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 for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free;

May 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.

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

The Lord's Prayer

Now a hymn about possible conflict between love for one's country and love for 'the Kingdom'.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

I Vow to Thee, My Country

https://youtu.be/bvouc8Qs_Ml

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no questions, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;

The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

Sir Cecil Rice

Dismissal and Blessing

Go into a world which needs the Love which our Faith cherishes and seeks to spread.
Go into a world which is crying out for the Kingdom, which only Love can bring.
Go into that world to Love those that hate you as well as those that love you.
And may the blessing of God;
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
be our way, our truth, our life
now, and always. Amen

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Service prepared by David Wrighton.

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