

2020-11-08 ... Video Reflection ... Revd Sam Johnson

Remembrance Sunday ...

This weekend's Bible reading from Matthew 5 speaks of love for neighbour and love for enemy.

On remembrance Sunday I think it is a particularly tricky passage, for surely we want to be thinking and remembering those who fought in the wars, those who defended our freedoms and those who still serve our country in the military, to pray for them.

And I agree, we should be remembering those who fought in the war, and to pray for those who are still fighting today.

But I think this passage calls us to remember all who died in war, all who have lost their lives, and to pray for them, neighbour or enemy.

Now I think even in saying this many of you are upset or offended by what I'm saying – and please don't misunderstand me here – I don't want to devalue or belittle or dishonour those who fought in the war, those who gave their lives for the freedoms we all share. I want to honour them, to be thankful for their sacrifice

What I am saying, however, is that there are many killed in war, many killed in conflict – and many killed needlessly.

Our prayers, I believe should be prayers for an end to war, an end to conflict and violence, and an end to needless killing – **and prayers for peace for all sides** ... those on 'our side' and those who are the 'enemy.'

That is what Jesus is commanding us to do – to pray for those who persecute us, to love our enemies as well as our neighbours. During both the war and now there are many who fight without a choice – or the choice is 'fight or be killed.'

During both the war and now there are many who fight having been brain-washed by a particular ideology. There are so many who have lost loved ones on all sides, and many who mourn.

On remembrance Sunday we remember those who defended our freedoms, Jesus' teachings point us to remember all who engage in conflict, and to love and pray for them.

And it's not some wishy-washy teaching either – for Jesus himself lived this out in his life and death. For on the cross Jesus prayed for those who were nailing him to the cross and hanging him up – **'Father, forgive them.'**

It would have been so easy in that moment for Jesus to have cried out 'Father, smite them, look what they are doing' ... but he didn't he loved them and prayed for them.

War and violence were not the plan for God's world. War and violence is not something God intended for his creation, nor is sin, hurt, pain, grief, or loss. They are caused by human action, human sin.

We know we all do things that are sinful, big and small, we cause hurt and pain, and through our action and inaction we sin ... all sin, we fall short – writes Paul in a letter to the Romans. **PTO**

And ultimately we should face the punishment of death. For sin ultimately leads to death and destruction.

In his crucifixion, his death, Jesus took upon himself the pain, the sin, the mess of the world at war, and he took that punishment for sin – the death and destruction, and offered a chance for renewal, for restoration, for forgiveness, and a chance to live forever with God. To rise in glory, renewed, restored redeemed, free from the punishment of sin, free from the struggling and striving that so often leads to conflict.

Jesus came to show a different way, to show the way of love for one another, love for all, love even for those who persecute us, who we would class as ‘enemy,’ a love that leads to life, a perfect life.

So this remembrance Sunday, as we remember those who fought for our freedom, and we pray for those who continue to serve in the armed forces, pray too for those who persecute, those who would be seen as enemy – pray for God’s peace.

And pray all this out of thankfulness for the freedom we all have, the freedom to be free from the punishment of sin through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Amen.