

John 15: 9 – 17

'Remembrance in 2022'

Introduction ...

War in 2022

Not what we expected

Not what we wanted

Not British troops on the ground, in the air or on the sea but still war in Europe.

So let our thoughts, our understanding, our concern and our thanksgiving for lives dedicated to justice and freedom be wider than our own nation this Remembrance Sunday.

World Wars ...

As we're reminded each time the Kohima epitaph is read, those who gave their lives in war hoped that their sacrifice was made for a **better future** for coming generations. Many of them would understand that "Peace" being merely the absence of war was not enough. We need to keep that in mind as we consider – or even enter into – conflicts of our time.

Here's a poem by **Brian Wren**:

'Say 'No' to peace

If what they mean by peace

Is the quiet misery of hunger,

The frozen stillness of fear,

The silence of broken spirits

The unborn hopes of the oppressed.

Tell them that peace

Is the shouting of children at play

The babble of tongues set free

The thunder of dancing feet

And a father's voice singing.

Say "No" to peace

If what they mean by peace

Is a rampart of gleaming missiles

The arming of distant wars

Money at ease in castles

And grateful poor at the gate.

Tell them that peace

is the hauling down of flags,

the forging of guns into ploughs

the giving of lands to the landless

and hunger a fading dream.'

At the end of this service, we're invited to make an Act of Commitment to responsible living and faithful service. And we're invited to do so as a result of remembering those who gave, and who still give, their lives to make this world a better place in which to live.

This pattern of commitment is embedded in the Christian Faith. In our Bible reading, we heard that pattern set out in the words of Jesus. He too gave his life – in order to break the power that sin (pride, greed, hatred) can hold over us, in order to show that love is stronger than hatred and in order that we might know – through his death and resurrection – that darkness can never overcome his light and that there is a life through and beyond death.

A reflection – by **Nick Fawcett** was written after a visit to Ypres, Belgium. Every night at 8pm people gather beneath the Menin gate to observe the ceremony of the Last Post. It is a simple yet profoundly moving tribute to those who gave their lives during the first World War. The location could hardly be more fitting, the beautiful town of Ypres having been reduced to rubble during that conflict but lovingly restored afterwards, stone for stone. More powerful still, on the Menin Gate are inscribed the names of thousands of soldiers killed in the surrounding area and with no known grave. This is what he wrote:

'It was March when we visited Ypres,

just a few weeks short of the spring,

the flowers were starting to open,

the birds beginning to sing.

Outside, in the fertile lowlands,

the grass grew lush and green,

no sign now of the carnage

which once these fields had seen.

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But all at once fell silent
as the clock came round to eight,
and a poignant tribute sounded
beneath the Menin Gate.

Another sad reminder,
another fond farewell;
a proud and thankful blessing,
a heart-rendering death knell.

And as the bugles faded
till their sound was heard no more,
we saw then all too clearly
the dreadful face of war.

Instead of names around us
there were young men in their prime,
a tragic generation
cut down before their time.

And in the busy centre,
a constant hum of sound,
as a milling throng of people
pursued their daily round.
Few hints here of the horrors
that racked this charming place,
mock medieval splendour
and pleasant open space.

But as the sunlight faded
and night began to fall,
a little crowd assembled
beside the city wall.

In different moods they stood there,

some laughing, some in tears,
some talking of the weather,
some hiding inner fears.

Our hearts were there beside them,
we stood knee-deep in mud,
and shared the awful horror
of fields dyed red with blood.
We heard their cries of anguish,
we felt their searing pain,
and we understood more clearly
this must never be again.

Yet the battle is not over,
though the war may long be past,
the fighting may have halted
but the cause is only masked.

Unless we come together
until we learn to share
until we love more widely
and think in ways more fair;
until we build so bravely
that all we say and do
gives our hope of breaking barriers
some hope of coming true.

Without this the Last Post may be sounded
in the future just the same,
but thousands who it heralds
may feel they died in vain.'

May we play our part, however small, in ensuring that this is not the case and may we pray for God's grace and strength to guide ourselves and leaders across the world into ways of love, justice and peace. Amen