

Remembrance Sunday - Micah 4:1-5; Philippians 4:6-9; Matthew 5:43-end

As time moves on, the First and Second World Wars, and even more recent conflicts, become an ever distant memory. For some of us, they are not even memories, but rather things we learnt about in our history lessons at school. For those of us who have never experienced war first hand, it's perhaps quite difficult to appreciate just how much suffering was involved and the horrific experiences so many people had to go through. So, how vital it is that we continue to set aside this Sunday each year to remember – to remember those who have given their lives in the service of their country in conflicts past and present, and the many whose lives continue to be scarred by those conflicts. It's important to remember – lest we forget. And that remembering is perhaps given more poignancy this year as we commemorate the end of the First World War – described as the 'war to end all wars' – yet sadly resulting in the loss of millions of lives.

And as we remember, it's helpful to be reminded, too, of the implications that our remembering has for *our* daily living. Because, as our Bible readings today remind us, as those who are committed to following Christ, each one of us are called to be *peacemakers*. It's easy to assume that this is primarily the task of politicians and the United Nations. But the truth is that in our daily lives, in our small way, *we* can indeed make a difference.

The prophet Micah, prophesying back in the 8th century BC, sets forth a vision of a golden age when peace and prosperity will reign once more. And how will this come about? Well, underlying the picture of peoples and nations streaming to Jerusalem and to God's holy Temple, is a simple message – that true and lasting peace can only be achieved when people turn or re-turn to the Lord – when they seek *his* truth and walk according to *his* way; when they acknowledge the supreme sovereignty of the living God. When this happens, people will no longer seek to resolve their differences by means of the sword, but rather they'll learn to live in peace and harmony. And why should this be so? Well, it's because the source of true peace is God himself. The thing is, there can be no real peace in the world until we have peace with God. Until we find that peace with God, we cannot know real peace among ourselves.

The apostle Paul takes this further in our reading from his Letter to the Philippians. Here he talks of what it means for us, as believers, to be people of peace. We have here the promise of the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guarding our hearts and minds. God is with us, and we can know his *perfect* peace in our lives. Now the idea of peace in the New Testament derives its meaning from the Old Testament word for peace – ‘shalom’ – it refers to rather more than our present-day understanding of peace, which tends to be simply about an absence of war and conflict. Rather, the *biblical* concept of peace has a root meaning of ‘wholeness’ – it incorporates both our peace with *God*, as well as our peace with *other people* – the peace which mends broken relationships.

And in order to enjoy *God’s peace*, we must place Christ *first* in our lives. We need to be immersed in prayer; we need to allow our minds to be orientated towards *godly* thinking – to seek to value what is true, attractive and praiseworthy in other people; to walk in accordance with God’s word; to aim to model all our relationships with others on Christ himself. If we do these things, we will know *God’s* guarding peace in our lives.

And then in our Gospel reading, Our Lord outlines what lies at the heart of peacemaking- “.....Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.....” If we profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, then our love should be *unlimited*. If we’re merely showing love to those we like and get on with, then what’s the use in that – we’re not doing anything substantially different to the way in which the vast majority of our society behaves. The thing is, *God* doesn’t show any discrimination or differentiation in his love towards all whom he has made – the good *and* the bad, the righteous *and* the unrighteous. So if *God* is like this, then *we too* should be the same. And our Lord Jesus himself provides us with the supreme example of how we should love our enemies. So we need to be open to the transforming power of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives. Because it is the Spirit, working in our lives from day to day, who directs us to demonstrate love to all and fills us with God’s peace.

So on this Remembrance Sunday, we’re reminded that peace begins with each and every one of *us*, as those who seek to follow the Lord. It begins when we

allow *God's* peace to fill and transform our lives, and then when that peace radiates out through us to those amongst whom we live and work. Then, through our witness, others will come to know *God's* peace for themselves.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that we are reconciled to you through your Son and his saving work on the Cross. Help us, in turn, to be agents of reconciliation in our daily lives. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me. In Jesus' name. Amen.