

"REMEMBERING"

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- [0 : 00] Lord, as we come to share your word now, open our eyes to your presence, open our ears to your voice, speak into our minds, break into our thoughts, take hold of our hand and fill our hearts with your grace this very day.
- In Jesus' name. Amen. When we remember and when we perhaps listen to some of the old wartime music and songs, it's very easy to be nostalgic, isn't it?
- It's music that stirs the heart, fans the flicker of patriotic spirit into brightest flame and brings perhaps a tear to the eye. It always makes us wish for the good old days.
- I say almost because I don't think that is really why we want to remember. While it's true that the war brought out the best in many people and in the country, it's not something we would want to repeat simply in order to become more noble and less selfish.
- Certainly not. But who can listen to the lines of the song, there'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover and not be moved.
- [1 : 27] There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow. Just you wait and see. There'll be love and laughter and peace ever after tomorrow when the world is free.
- The shepherd will tend his sheep, the valley will bloom again and Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again.
- There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow. Just you wait and see. We're sometimes moved by these words, are we not?
- Probably because at that time there was no peace. There were no bluebirds. Many young men and women in uniform and civilians were dying.
- And an evil dictator was almost successful in a diabolical plan to exterminate Jews and gypsies and disabled people. Who in the eyes of this dictator were of no worth.
- [2 : 35] Many cities in Europe were being devastated by bombs and by the tyranny of occupation. And the idea of safe passage across the Atlantic was only a dream.
- Eighty years or so is not such a long time in the history of the world. But in those years the political map of the world has changed tremendously.
- The empires against which we fought are gone. Their heirs have become trading partners and friends. Immigration from countries has changed our society.
- In many ways we are not the same nation that we were during those dark war years. All of what has happened over those years calls us again and again to the task of remembering.
- Remembering so that we can learn from the past. Be compelled even more earnestly! To work for peaceful solutions to international and internal disputes before we must again resort to the solutions of war.
- [3 : 49] As you know there are still many conflicts going on the most serious and menacing of which are those which have governments and corrupt military powers will have turned against their own people in a seemingly greedy race for power.

their faces are on our nightly news and their refugees are on our doorsteps. It's in this memory of wars long ago and out of all this all too real and present world situation that we come to church today to remember.

We come to remember and to give thanks for past sacrifices and to seek God's guidance for continued peace in our land and also pray for peace in the world.

There are many up and down our land today who have memories of the war years. Some memories they want to forget.

Some memories they want to remember. Also a very strong belief that to glorify war is contrary to the gospel of Jesus.

[5 : 08] But at the same time I feel it's important to be thankful. Very thankful for the sacrifice of those who gave or risked their lives to maintain the peace and freedom for us who are here today.

In Psalm 46 we're reminded the source of our own personal strength and hope lies in God. Indeed the source of our strength and hope as a nation lies in God as does our hopes of building a country of peace and justice.

In wartime and peacetime we must remember that if we rely on our own strength we're really only relying on weakness.

But to rely on God is to tap into real strength, real power, real love. The passage Gene read for us from 1 Peter speaks of love.

It says finally all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

[6 : 25] On the contrary repay evil with blessing because of this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. The passage also speaks of the power of love and the necessity of loving.

All too often the virtue of love is seen as a weakness as something we can do only when everything's going well. We equate love with a syrupy kind of emotion.

We equate love with like. But to be more serious, we get the idea that we can only love those people we like. Those we agree with, those who are on our side, or those whose race, creed, or nationality match ours.

But the truth of the gospel presents a very different, and indeed a very much harder ideal. The word love used here in the original Greek language is agape.

Agape love, and it's really a word of action. To love someone in this biblical way means to act in such a way that their health and well-being comes first and foremost.

[7 : 46] The Christian's called to act for the well-being of another person, and if necessary, to give one's life for another. And we know of many examples of this during wartime, and in times of peace too.

There are many instances where someone has lost their life by trying to save someone else, just as we heard earlier. But we live in a country where it's rarely asked of us to give our life for someone, or sacrifice our life for what we believe in.

However, sadly, in many parts of the world, Christians are persecuted. Many die. Many die every day for their beliefs. What love they have.

To love someone in this biblical way means showing the kind of love that has no limits. It means living in such a way that our words, our actions, promote the well-being of others.

In wartime, soldiers who had just met found themselves making tremendous sacrifices for one another and found themselves strengthened to give more than they ever thought they had.

[9 : 12] Jesus' command love one another and live a life of love presents a strong challenge to live according to another vision, according to another way of looking at things.

In the light of the sacrifices, remember today, we are called to give of ourselves for a greater ideal, for the ideal of love and justice in our own land and in the world.

This is not easy. It's not easy indeed to live this kind of love. It's probably the hardest thing we'll ever do. To control our need to be right, to keep a handle on our need for power, to be the best, will ask from us much more than we could ever be able to give on our own.

But it's what is required of us. If we're to form a world of peace and justice, peace and justice in our families, our communities, and ultimately in our world, in the end we have to realize that what is required of us is that we place our trust in God and in God's power, not in our own power, to trust in God and not in our own strength, our own wisdom, or our own military might.

power. In these verses from chapter 3 of 1 Peter recognizes that this kind of living is not always the formula for worldly success.

[10 : 52] But it does tell us that it's better for the person of faith to suffer for doing good than for doing harm. These verses assert that this kind of power comes not from within, not from the human spirit, but from the God who gave us life.

This kind of power comes not from ourselves, but from the God who came to earth in the person of Jesus, who through the power of his life, death, and resurrection gave life to the world.

It's this kind of power that enables us to put our own agendas aside and to live in love for others. Friends, if we want unity, we must, as this passage tells us, seek peace, pursue it.

Peace like love does not just happen. And true peace is more, much more, than the absence of war. As you know, in order to win the last two world wars, if we were involved, the entire country had to pull together they had to work single-mindedly towards that goal.

In the next century, our only hope for survival lies in our single-minded pursuit of peace and justice in the broader global environment.

[12 : 22] To remember the past is to give honor to those who gave their lives for peace. To truly and faithfully remember the past is also to put all of our efforts into seeing that our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren do not have to go to war.

It's to put all our efforts into seeing that love and justice prevail in this country and around the world. And by remembering, we hope that ours is the last generation to know world-wide war.

The poem in Flandersfields speaks of this haunting hope, the seemingly elusive dream of peace and the necessity to always remember.

Children's Church are looking at this poem as well. Flandersfields, Flandersfields, the poppies blow between the crosses row on row that mark our place and in the sky.

The larks still bravely singing fly scarce ahead amid the guns below. We are the dead. Short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and well-loved and now we lie in Flandersfields.

[14 : 01] Take up our quarrel with the foe to you from failing hands. We throw the torch, be yours to hold it high and if you break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flandersfields.

Major John Macrae wrote this poem in May 1915. It was the middle of the First World War.

He wrote it sitting on the back of an ambulance after he had just buried a dear friend. He felt at the end of his terror. He couldn't stand the killing, the cruelty anymore.

So he wrote this poem to vent his anger, his frustration, sorrow. So he saw poppies springing up in fields where there was nothing left to move, nothing left to grow.

Just like those poppies in a lifeless field, he searched for some hope, some life in his own barren and lifeless heart.

[15 : 18] And every time that poem is read, we can picture the neat, endless, row upon row of white grave markers, plain white crosses or stones as symbols of the supreme sacrifice.

Times of war stir up the same feelings in every generation. fear, uneasiness, fear, frustration, sorrow.

It's very distressing that we still have to feel this fear of war today in our super technological, affluent, and prosperous society. The First World War, that war to end all wars, didn't quite deliver its promise.

Twenty years after the First World War, we had the Second World War. Since then there have been many wars and there are still wars going on today. Is this how we honour those who died in battle everywhere, returning violence for violence, perpetrating the hatred, the strife, the killing, while maintaining vast injustices, inequalities, and exploitations in many parts of the world.

So it's even more important now to come together and remember, just as we do today, that, friends, it's not enough to just remember.

[17 : 04] We must also be willing to learn from the past, to truly seek help from the one who abhors all violence.

Learning from the past is no longer an option. It has now become a question of sheer survival, sheer survival of the human race and the entire planet.

it. You know, our violence has escalated to the point where we can destroy ourselves for good. In 1959, Martin Luther King said, the choice is no longer between violence and non-violence.

Rather, it's a choice between non-violence and non-existence. And that's very relevant, relevant in the days we live in now.

Violence and wars are all around us. Is this the way to honor those who suffered and died in battle? We're not here to glorify war.

[18 : 12] We're here today to honor human sacrifice and suffering. If those millions who had died in all the wars of our past centuries could speak to us today, they'd cry out, stop the madness.

We laid down our lives for you so that you may live. Not so that you may keep on killing and hating and exploiting and resenting.

Friends, let us remember those men and women. Let us make the cause of love and peace our vision, our aim. Let us remember by doing everything we can to avoid the need for more cemeteries, more mourning.

living. Today, let us also remember another who died some 2,000 years ago on a cruel cross, who still cries out to us today the same message in John 15, my command is this, love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one none this, that he laid down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command, love one another.

[19 : 50] This Jesus who brought the message of God's love was hated. This Jesus who tried so hard to tell us that God is love was crucified because he refused to fight violence with violence.

instead of lashing out in retaliation, Jesus suffered a horrific death for each one of us.

Nothing else has the power to overcome hatred and violence like the love given freely in sacrifice. Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness as the flood, when the prince of life, our ransom, shed for us his precious blood, who his love cannot remember, who can cease to sing his praise.

He can never be forgotten throughout heaven's eternal days. For the first time there was one who showed in his life suffering and death as the only way to break the chains of violence and destruction, fill the pain, encounter the enemy with a love that knows no bounds, hang on against all odds with boldness and trust, cast down evil with love and then watch life explode into a beauty and freshness never dreamt of.

Let's remember the one who laid down his life for each one of us. Remember that greater love has no one than this that he laid down his life for his friends.

[21 : 38] Remember a reading from earlier? Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble, do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, on the contrary, repay evil with blessing.

because of this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. May it be so. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word in the Bible.

Help us, we pray in the days to come to seek the good of the world, to work for the increase of peace and justice. And we pray for the peace of the world, for the wise resolution of conflicts, the release of captive and oppressed people everywhere.

And Father, we ask that all who have gathered this day up and down our land to remember friends, family, and comrades will have felt that you were right there with them.

Help each one of us to remember that you made the ultimate sacrifice for us all through your son Jesus, dying on that cruel cross, dying on that cross with