

New St. James Presbyterian Church
Remembrance Day
Sunday, November 8, 2020
Rev. Mark McLennan

“ON THIS DAY”

Scriptures:

Micah 4

Ephesians2: 11-22

Psalm 91: 1-6, 14-16

John 15: 9-17

There is a long-standing discussion about the role of the secular world of governments and businesses in the life of the church.

Many congregations display flags in their sanctuaries while others have chosen to display the flag in social halls or take the flag down altogether in church buildings.

There is merit to both positions:

- on the one hand, the church is always located in space and time, and shares in the rough and tumble world of government, politics, and foreign policy as the Hebrew prophets proclaim;
- On the other hand, God’s love embraces the whole earth, rather than focusing on any nation’s cause or victory.

As Abraham Lincoln noted in a time of war:

- *we need to pray that we are on God’s side, rather than that God is on our side!*
God’s care embraces the whole earth, including our nation’s “enemies.”

Still, in many congregations, members expect that our nation’s veterans be remembered in light of their sacrifices for our nation’s well-being.

While I am not a flag waver myself, an incarnational theology needs to take the affairs of state seriously, both in terms of prophetic critique and grateful affirmation.

LIVING FAITH – Section 8.5

World Peace

8.5.1

Christ, the Prince of Peace, calls his followers to seek peace in the world.

8.5.2

We know that nations have fought in self-defense and that war, at times, may be unavoidable. But the tragic evil that comes with war, the slaughter of men, women, and children must rouse us to work for peace.

8.5.3

We protest against the world arms race that diminishes our ability to fight hunger, ignorance, poverty, and disease.

We fear nuclear war and the devastation it would bring.

We affirm that God is at work when people are ashamed of the inhumanity of war and work for peace with justice.

We pray for peace to him who is the Prince of Peace.

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While such words can be seen as platitudes, they remind us that “*peace*” and “*justice*” should be the goal of all national policies.

They also remind us, in a time of growing individualism and me-first politics and economics, that national health depends on **sacrifice**;

- not just in times of war, but in our civic responsibility, human rights, and tax paying.

Ironically, some of the people who most vigorously wave our flag are the most self-interested when it comes to our nation’s responsibility to support its most vulnerable citizens.

Bruce Epperley:

Remembrance Day is about **gratitude** and **stewardship**.

On Remembrance Day, we proclaim our gratitude to those whose service in the military has secured our freedoms through the years.

Whether or not we approve of our nation’s foreign policy, we need to support the everyday people - - mostly working class, -- who fight our nation’s wars.

We need to say, “*thank you.*”

But our thanksgiving should lead to **action**, both in support of the well-being of veterans, especially those who have been injured or traumatized by war, and in our own commitment to the common good and our nation’s care for its most vulnerable citizens, those for whom our soldiers sacrifice.

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It is easy, as the prophets and Jesus both noted, to speak of sacrifice, without making the commitment to sacrifice for the well-being of our neighbors.

When Remembrance Day is understood in the spirit of the biblical tradition, it reminds us that there is no such thing as rugged individualism or absolute property rights;

- everything is a gift from God to be used for the well-being of others as well as our own kin.

Sacrifice is not just the responsibility of veterans; it is required of all who would follow the way of Jesus.

In that spirit, **justice** and **peace** should guide our national and personal decision-making.

Accordingly, remembrance of the sacrifices made by veterans, challenges us to ask:

- Do our actions promote the overall well-being of our nation’s peoples and this good earth?
- Do we focus on our own welfare to the exclusion of our neighbor?
- What are we willing to sacrifice so that others may live abundantly?

God’s vision of abundant life is always about “*us*” as well as “*mine.*”

So, on Remembrance Day, let us be grateful and let our gratitude inspire us to generosity and commitment to the well-being of our nation, most especially its most vulnerable citizens and veterans who suffer the ravages of war.

Then, our love of nation will take us beyond nationalism or self-interest to the affirmation of our role as God's partners in healing the earth.

Joanna Harader, Mennonite pastor: 2010

I hate war. But I do not hate soldiers.

I believe engaging in armed combat goes against the teachings of Jesus.

But I respect the fact that war veterans have made incredible sacrifices for causes they believed to be noble.

I am generally in favor of cutting military spending.

But I think we should increase spending on medical and psychological care for veterans.

The high rates of mental illness, divorce, and suicide among military veterans causes me deep sorrow.

My first-grader came home from school earlier this week with a little newspaper that featured an Iraq war veteran who had lost his leg.

She told me he was a hero because he killed the bad guys.

"How do you know," I asked, "who the bad guys are?"

Remember what Jesus said." *"Love your enemies?"*

Is there a way, on this day, for me to honor the spirit of sacrifice but not the acts of destruction;

- to give thanks for the selfless nature of our veterans without condoning the violence they committed;
- to advocate for better treatment of soldiers without supporting the work of the military industrial complex?

I believe the best way to honor all veterans is **to make sure there are as few new veterans as possible.**

May that be our prayer - on this day.

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, PRINCE OF PEACE, AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this is sacred land upon which we are privileged to live and work.

We recognize the deep connection and the long-standing relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land of Southwest Ontario and of London.

This land has supported human beings for at least the past 10,000 years.

This land is the traditional territory of:

the Anishinaabeg the Haudenosaunee the Lenape

the Attawandaron and the Wendat

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Call to Worship

M: In times of trouble and war we called to the Lord, and the Lord rescued us and gave us peace.

P: We will proclaim God's faithfulness now and to all generations.

M: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

P: We will share the peace of Christ, that passes all understanding, with this and with all generations.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of peace, we worship this morning, recognizing that you, and you alone, are worthy of our praise.

You have the power to overcome hatred with love and to defy death with resurrection.

You sent us your son to live among us, and when we rejected him and condemned him to die on a cross, you raised him from the dead

Because you are a God of peace, who did not seek revenge but instead reacted with love, we are able to worship our ascended Lord.

Reigning in glory and power he is our High Priest and Advocate.

To you, to him, and to your Holy Spirit we offer our adoration and our praise.

God of peace, we confess before you this morning that we are not always a people of peace. We know that, at times, nations have fought in self-defence and that, at times, war may be unavoidable.

But we also acknowledge the tragic evil that comes with war, the slaughter of men, women, and children, and the devastation of your creation. Loving God, forgive us for our part in the inhumanities of war. Forgive us for our complacency as entire cultures are destroyed. Forgive us for our silence when we see images of such violence on our screen and on our televisions and in our newspapers.

Rouse us to work with you to bring peace to your world. O God, your promises endure from generation to generation. Knowing what you have done, we wait for our prayers to be answered, trusting you and turning to you in praise and worship today. AMEN

Assurance of Pardon

Christ died so that we might live.

Through his sacrifice, we have been forgiven.

Rejoice in the forgiveness you have been given and share it with others. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving God,

in every generation you have been present with your people:

in times of poverty and prosperity,

in times of sorrow and joy,

in times of war and peace.

Today, we remember God's grace and care in times of need and crisis and, give thanks for the courage and sacrifice of the women, men, and families of the armed forces, who have worked for peace, justice, and protection for many generations.

We thank you for those you have been called to a life of service for their countries. May they know your protection and show your love in all they do.

We thank you for the places where peace has been restored and where all are able to live out the fullness of your freedom. May all corners of the globe know your peace and experience your justice.

We thank you for the people who work to improve the lives of all who are exploited. May all your beloved children be given the life that you desire for them.

We thank you for the many organizations in Canada working to bring hope to people who face social exclusion. May all who live in our communities have access to the support they need to thrive.

*Prayer list: Laura Summers, Bob Baron,
New St. James congregation and Dr. David Clark
All veterans of armed forces – here and around the world
Those who have suffered injury or loss because they served
Those who care for them now
All those touched by war, famine, poverty, epidemic, tragedy
Natural or man-made disaster, death, or disease*

We thank you for the dedication of those who serve in the church.
May your church always be a place of hope, healing and welcome.
We join our hearts and voices now as we pray together using Jesus' words:

LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, On earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, Now and forever. Amen.*

OFFERING QUOTE *Ethel Percy Andrus , teacher*

It is only in the giving of oneself to others that we truly live.

BENEDICTION

Be at peace Go in peace
Seek peace From the Prince of Peace
In the name of the Creator, Saviour and Holy Spirit
Amen