

Sermon – All Souls - Remembrance November 7, 2021

Loving God,

May our reflections on scripture this day, inspire us to be strong followers of Jesus in both word and deed. Amen.

In our culture, November is the time of year when we remember people of the past. Between, All Saints Day, All Souls Day and Remembrance Day, people in our families, the church and the wider community are held in our thoughts and prayers.

The death of those who have served in the Armed Forces is certainly in our minds this week. On Thursday, we will gather as always at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month to remember the great sacrifices that were made by men and women of our communities who worked, fought and died in the great wars of the past. And we take time to remember what they gave on our behalf so that you and I may live in peace.

On Remembrance day, we choose to highly value the commitments of those who have gone before us. On Remembrance Day we choose to honour them and their sacrifices. Being Padre of the Legion, I have had the honour of speaking to many in this community who served. Just this past week I had a chance to talk with Art Boon. He and his comrades fought all through France,

liberated Holland, crossed the Rhine on make shift bridges and pushed on into Germany until the Day of Surrender. He saw a member of his tank killed before his eyes...People like Art never talk about war in a triumphant way. They talk about it as an awful thing that involved a lot of pain and sacrifice.

Those of us here who are young and do not have memories of war are so fortunate. To those who have gone before us we need to say thank you... we in our own time need to remember the enormous cost of freedom and peace. We need to affirm that the courageous sacrifices of the past are part of the peace we live today.

But of course, in this week following All Souls it is not just those who have died in war and conflict that we bring to mind. It is all those of our friends and family who have walked this journey of life and have moved on to the next. In time, Death touches us all. Sometimes it seems at a distance, sometimes it feels very close and frightening. Sometimes it seems peaceful and natural, other times it is painful, and tragic.

In the past year, we have had to say goodbye to many of our friends and family members...

Some of us have lost: daughters, sons, mothers, fathers,
long time friends...

Some of them were far too young... others endured much
suffering...

Life has heart breaking moments. How do people move
from pain, and once again find joy? Somehow, you keep
breathing. With the help of friends and your church
family you keep eating even though your stomach isn't
interested. You move through a dark and strange place
that seems apart from the rest of world.

You and your families have your own stories of loss and
grief. Perhaps similar; perhaps different. What's it been
like for you to move through that time of grief? Who has
helped you through it? Have you been able to call upon
God? Do you wonder if you will ever see your loved ones
again?

Jesus said to his disciples,

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God,
believe also in me.*

*In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it
were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a
place for you?*

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

What the disciples were slowly coming to realize is that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus had once and for all revealed a powerful truth. The truth that it is the **love of God** that in the end has the final say. When Jesus talked to his disciples about being raised on the last day, he was not talking about a point in time or a particular event. The last day is code for the last word. In other words, who is it that has the last word; who is it that has the final say? Pain and suffering and tragedy in the created world are inevitable, but it does not have the final word, and death does not have the final say.

I know that sometimes people get very angry at God because it doesn't seem right that a loving God would allow so much suffering. I can sympathize with that. But those who move into a strong and mature faith come to see that the love of God and the omnipotence of God is not about keeping suffering away from us at all times. God's omnipotence is about the fact that through the reality of Jesus Christ, pain and suffering and death do not have the final power over us. God has the power to draw us all back to him, and nothing in the world can stop it.

All things come of thee O Lord, and through thy will, all things shall be gathered to thee once more.

Even in the midst of horrible loss and grief, it is God not death who has the final say. God has the final word to bring about unexpected healing; the final say to restore joy in surprising places; the final say to draw us all into eternal life with God and with all those who have gone before us in ways beyond our imagination. This is not something out of a textbook. This is what we experience when we hold one another and walk the path of our Lord.

God has the final word. And that word is life, life that is transformed through Jesus Christ BOTH in this world and the next.

And when we gather around the altar today, THAT is exactly what we are remembering, that is what we are celebrating, that is what we are giving thanks for.

Rest eternal God will grant unto all of us, and let light perpetual shine upon us.

INFSHS. AMEN