

## Remembering More

P 27 Yr A Matthew 25:1-14 November 8, 2020

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One hundred years ago the world was trying to emerge from the grip of fear and anxiety. The relief that was felt when the guns went silent on November 11, 1918 was replaced by panic as nations realized that the Spanish Flu, a deadly pandemic was making its way around the world. Four different waves of the disease infected about a third of the world's population until finally ending in 1920- an experience which changed the way we approach and understand public health.

On Remembrance Week we pause and think of those who fought and died in the two World Wars, in Korea, in Peacekeeping and Nato missions, and in Afghanistan. It is a solemn time when we bring to mind those who offered their lives in defense of freedom and peace. Those who went overseas and never returned from places with names like Vimy Ridge, Dieppe, Monte Cassino, Hong Kong, Kapyong, and Kandahar. Those who went and came back forever changed by the experience. We remember who they were, where they went, and why they stepped forward in our nation's time of need.

And we remember that those who served faced more than just bullets and bombs but also illness as they struggled at sea, in the air, in lands far from the safety of home. My grandfather wrote in his memoirs that during the First World War they were looking for volunteers to go to the Caribbean to free up garrison troops. He chose not to go but instead went to the trenches in France and remarks that it was wise because those who went from Nova Scotia to the Caribbean never saw the end of the war because they died from disease.

Our First World War memorial here at St. James records the names of those who died not just in combat but also those who died from disease or wounds after they left the fighting. For the dangers that those we remember on November 11<sup>th</sup> faced were not merely from the enemy but also from the conditions they had to endure and the places they had to go.

And this year as we prepare ourselves for a winter in the midst of Covid, I think our remembrance of those who served and the conditions they faced offer lessons for our world and time. The first is that we need to pay attention to the wisdom and experience which has been passed on to our generation from those who came before us.

They paid for steep prince for peace and we need to understand that for peace to be a reality in our world we have to do our part. We have to demand justice, refuse to allow oppression to continue, and we have to act to build a better world. And that involves more than simply saying the right words or going through the motions. Because as we read in Amos, God demands that we let justice roll like a river through the land. So that everyone can experience it, see it, and know it in their lives.

And part of the justice and peace we are called to create in our world involves health. For our health and the health of those around us, is the result of conscious and deliberate effort. Health like peace is not something that simply happens but something we as individuals and we as neighbors, as a town and county, and as a country create for each other. That effort includes doctors, nurses, other medical professionals, and our hospitals and clinics. But it also happens because we, as families and communities, do our part. We keep our hands clean, we wear masks, we maintain distance, and we respect that some things we would like to do we can not in order to keep each other safe.

And as I mentioned at the start the public health system we have, and here I am talking about more than just hospitals and doctors but having provincial and federal medical officers to coordinate measures to keep us all safe, that public health system is something that came from the last pandemic which struck our world.

And we have to be ready to pass along our experiences from this pandemic to those who come after us. To change what has not worked this time and preserve what has served us in this latest health emergency. Not simply for ourselves but for our children and grandchildren. So they can learn from our successes and our mistakes just as we have learned from the successes and mistakes of the generations who came before us.

And the third lesson for us to take from our remembrance is perhaps a little bit more personal and more demanding- we have to be ready. We have to be ready to dedicate ourselves to being the ones who make a difference here and now. We have to be ready to take up the torch passed on to us and hold it high so that those who came before can rest and so that we can build upon what they have already done.

And that is true whether our enemy is tyranny and oppression or whether it is

illness and disease or whether it is both. We have to be ready as the gospel says because we don't know when or where we will be called upon. But let's make no mistake we will be called upon to do our part and to transform our world.

Whether that means putting on a uniform and serving, whether it means sharing our gifts for the common good, whether it means supporting and being there for each other, there is not doubt that Jesus calls us to be lights in the world so that others can find the way to move through the shadows of fear and despair. So we need to be ready to shine, to share what we have been given, so that the lost are found, the hurting comforted, and grace and love are seen no matter what is happening in our world.

For as people of faith we are called to be beacons of light in the fear and uncertainty of this time by proclaiming and showing the hope of the gospel. As people of faith we are called to demand that our elected officials, our systems, and our nation learn from the past and work together to improve life for everyone. As people of faith we follow Jesus and by following we discover our part in what God is doing in our world.

Which is why this week we pause and remember how precious peace is and the price which was paid by so many for our sakes. We pause and remember that working for peace, building the better world that God intends involves our service and our sacrifice. For we remember and bring to mind the names, the places, the history behind us so that the past anchors us as we face the troubles of today and look toward the future which God intends and desires for our world.

One hundred years ago the world was struggling to emerge from a global pandemic. And I have no doubt that in this church, and in homes throughout this town and county, province, country and even world, people prayed for the strength and vision they needed to care for each other and find the way forward. And God answered them with grace and hope.

As we look to our uncertain future, we pray for the strength and vision we need to care for each other and find the way forward. Trusting and believing that God will provide what we need to pass through this time into a future which we will help build through our remembering and through our love and care for each other.