

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and welcome you to this service for Remembrance Sunday 2020. I call you to worship with these scripture sentences:

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46.1

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121.1-2

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew

their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40.31

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6.8

We meet in the presence of God.

We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

Let us join now in the Act of Remembrance and 2 minutes of silence:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

Let us say together:

We will remember them.

The beginning of the two-minute silence signalled by Last Post

Silence

The completion of the silence signalled by Reveille

Let us pray:

Ever-living God we remember those whom you have gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence; may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples and establish harmony among the nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our Bible reading comes from the gospel of Matthew 22:34-40.

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' 37 He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You

shall love your neighbour as yourself.” 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Here ends God’s reading, God’s word, God’s gift to us this day. May we hear in it the word we need to get us on our way. Amen.

If you were to pick up a newspaper today on Remembrance Sunday, or later today if you listen to the news on the radio or television, I imagine that you might get the impression that the only news there is in our world is bad news. It is bad news that fills up the front pages of our newspapers. It is bad news that commands the lead stories on our 24 hour news cycle.

I don’t know about you, but for me there are times when all of this bad news become overwhelming and it can bring us down. It is not just the stories about the surging virus and struggling economy, there are continuing acts of terrorism, war and racial division in so many places. Sometimes one wonders if there is anything good happening in the world.

Especially on a day that is set aside to remember the horrors of war and to bring to mind all of those who have died in defence of freedom, we could become quite depressed if this bad news were the only word that there was for us today.

But bad news is not what we affirm in the United Reformed Church. Certainly we acknowledge the destructive power and presence of evil in our world and the brokenness of our sinful world, but Christians know that that is not the only word and it is certainly not the ultimate word, for we believe that God has raised Jesus from the dead and that ultimately the good news is greater than the bad. The power of God to work for good is greater than the power of evil at work in the world.

Time and time again when we look into the face of an evil situation, we will find that there is some power for good working there. God’s power working for good may not always be obvious, it may not get reported in the papers or on the BBC, but goodness can happen, does happen, will continue to happen.

When we look back on World War II and the incredible evil and destructiveness that took place during those years we know that goodness was also at work. Sometimes that good was at work in seemingly small and silent ways, but it was at work none the less and ultimately it did overcome.

One example of how goodness happened during those war years is the beautiful story of a little Protestant village in southwest France that made goodness happen. During the Nazi occupation of France from 1940 to 1944, the small village of Le Chambon, high in the mountains of southern France was at work for good, quietly, peacefully, defiantly.

Under the leadership of the Revd Andre Trocme and his wife Magda, Le Chambon became a sanctuary for untold thousands of Jewish refugees during the height of the Nazi domination. At great risk to their own lives, the people of the town hid refugees in their homes, believing that they were a city of refuge like the ones mentioned in the Old Testament and believing that God wanted them to love their neighbours, and that even a trembling Jewish refugee on their door step was someone they should love as themselves.

Pastor Trocme stirred the conscience of the villagers. They believed that their non-violent action was stronger than the violence that surrounded them on every side. Quietly, but in full view of a nearby division of the Nazi SS, Le Chambon’s villagers and their clergy organised a “Kitchen resistance” that saved thousands of Jewish children and adults from certain death. The courage, strength and goodness of the village of Le Chambon made a difference in thousands of lives, the life-saving difference. The power of resurrection was alive in those people and goodness happened there.

The story of how these people, who in the midst of one of the greatest evils of all time, made goodness happen has been an inspiration to me, ever since the story came to light some years ago.

There are many different ways to respond to evil that we see around us, and of course one of the most popular and most common responses is to return evil. But the story of the people of Le Chambon reminds me that the Christian response to evil is to do good, to be sure this response is not always easy, or popular, and it is often difficult to carry out, but there is great power in goodness.

I imagine we have all witnessed goodness happening even in the midst of the evil of this current pandemic. We have witnessed the goodness of our front line workers in the health service, nationally and those working into our communities, locally to keep people safe, secure and fed.

As Christians we are motivated to make goodness happen because we love our Lord Jesus Christ and desire to follow in his ways. Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls and minds and secondly we are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

So let us take time on this Remembrance Sunday to proclaim God's power of goodness over evil and let us open ourselves to God's Spirit, that goodness may be at work in our lives and the lives of others; healing; helping; renewing; changing; forgiving and loving. May that be so today and always. Amen.

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace:

for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God;

May God give peace

God give peace

for those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;

May God give peace

God give peace

for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;

May God give peace

God give peace

for civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity;

May God give peace

God give peace

for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free;

May God give peace

God give peace

for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.

May God give peace

God give peace

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know.

Help us to lift our eyes above the torment

of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.

As we honour the past, may we put our
faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever.
Let us join together to pray as Jesus taught us when he said...
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.

And now may the love of God be above you to overshadow you, beneath you to uphold you, before
you to guide you, behind you to protect you, close beside you and within you to make you able for all
things, through Jesus Christ our Lord and our risen Saviour. Amen.