

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Sunday 8 November 2009, Cleit

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

preacher: Rev Martin Grashoff

hymns: Church Hymnary. Fourth Edition (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005)

AT GLENBARR WAR MEMORIAL

Welcome

Reading : Isaiah 2:1-5 (*English Standard Version*)

Address

Among all the wars that have been fought in Kintyre, in Scotland, across Europe, and all around the world, this is most likely the one thing all agree on: the last word is about peace. That is why I read Isaiah's vision. There is an awful lot we will never understand about the cruelties of battle, the devastation caused by air raids, the horror of extermination camps, killing fields or ethnic cleansing, or any of the things war and revolution bring along. But we may pray that in the end we can still believe in peace and truly hope for it.

Remembering the casualties of two world wars, and of all the other wars since, we should honour their lives as they were given and taken. We should remember them by their names, because that is who they were.

But even more important is the moment we leave this place. Because what do we take home? Only sadness or anger? Or could we again be incited to work for peace and justice whenever and wherever we can do our bit?

Over the years I have spoken with British, Dutch, German and Indonesian people about war. What struck me most was the capability of people to continue their lives in a truly good way. People are able to forgive, to pick up the pieces and start again, to overcome divisions and traumas. I felt humbled by the wisdom and gentleness of those who had stood their ground in battle.

May we remember those who were killed from the perspective of all prophets who keep telling us about the possibility of peace.

Prayer

Remembrance

Reading the Names

Wreath Laying

Silence

Blessing

IN CLEIT CHURCH

Welcome & Intimations

Opening Hymn : 'Oh, the life of the world' (CH 141)

Remembrance

(Children lay a wreath at the pulpit, which is our war memorial)

Hymn : 'Lord, make us servants of your peace' (CH 527)

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

God our Creator,
we praise you for what you have given to each of us:
health, courage, fellowship, endurance, skills.
And we remember the moments we missed out
on one or more of these abilities.

God our Sustainer,
we praise you for the food and drink we have every day,
the joys of life we can share together.
And we remember the times and places without all of this,
the people and countries that starve and suffer.

God our Future,
we praise you for the peace and justice you have promised us,
in abundance and lasting for all time.
And we remember the lack of justice and peace
for which we are responsible.

God of heaven and earth,
we praise you for your creation
and we pray for all who suffer from its wounds.

And now as Jesus taught us, we pray:
Our Father...
...Amen.

Readings : Psalm 146 & Mark 12:28-34 (*Good News Bible*)

Hymn : 'What shall we pray for those who died?' (CH 712)

Sermon

Remembrance Day. Because Britain had an Empire, it has been involved in many wars around the world – and it still is. Yet, William the Conqueror was the last to

successfully invade the British Isles, and that was back in 1066. Today I would like to look at war from a slightly different perspective.

Between 1940 and 1945 The Netherlands were occupied by the Nazis. For the Dutch people Allied soldiers came in the autumn of 1944 and the spring of 1945 as liberators. Canadian, English, Welsh, Scottish, American and Polish soldiers step by step liberated us.

Many lost their lives or were severely wounded. The Dutch people, at least those who were there during the War, know very well for what purpose they gave their lives. It was against Nazi terror.

As a family we travelled on foot through the North of England in 1991. And every time again when older men noticed we were Dutch, some would come with their stories about Arnhem, or Walcheren, or some other place. They had been there and they wanted our children to know their story.

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We read a psalm. Why did I chose that? Because it links directly to that other side of war: being occupied by brutal forces. How do you endure that and survive?

Most people just tried to get on with it, just like people in Britain, who were targets for the German Luftwaffe. But others decided to resist the Nazi occupation. In the Dutch resistance most people were either communists or reformed people. The reformed population had always been very loyal to the government. But the German rulers were clearly violating the laws set by God. And therefore resistance was required.

These reformed people were often quite pious. They knew many psalms by heart and that was a major resource for their resistance. If the Nazis caught them, they could stand in front of a firing squad singing a psalm.

Don't put your trust in human leaders, Psalm 146 says – *vest op prinsen geen betrouwen*, in their old-fashioned Dutch – because God *judges in favour of the oppressed*. Words like these formed their motivation to hide Jews, or to enter the armed resistance. The thing that puzzles us afterwards is, why some did make this choice and others did not. Today the names of those who were killed are still remembered. Not so with their Nazi oppressors.

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But the most beautiful line in Psalm 146 is this: God *gives food to the hungry*. By the end of 1944 the West of Holland had to endure a very severe winter without any supplies. Some 3.5 million people were starving to death. Finally the RAF and the US Airforce took the risk of performing food droppings. Operation Manna it was called.¹ In

¹ There is a [website](#) for Operation Manna/Chowhound. It was performed by 30 RAF squadrons, including

eight days 11,000 tons of food were dropped which saved thousands of lives. Actually 1% of all that Lancaster bombers ever dropped during the Second World War was food for Holland.² In a documentary some years ago one of those who flew these missions, a gunner, looked back. 'It was the highlight of my life,' he said, and rubbed his eyes.

And this is actually where peace began. After the fighting, once the hungry were fed, people could honestly say the last lines of Psalm 146: *The LORD is King forever*.

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Now it is good to remember what liberation meant for those oppressed by Nazi terror. But how does it connect to our world today? Wars that have been fought since 1945 have been different every time. The wars we are involved in now hardly have any visible enemies, and we cannot be sure there are oppressed people longing to be liberated.

For soldiers today the situation is very different from the Second World War, in all aspects. Yet one thing is still the same: they are sent out on a mission and they have to accomplish it. Another constant factor is that evil still has to be called evil, and then addressed.

How to decide on that? What is really evil? And is that worth fighting against? A very general, but I think also very useful, rule is given by the teacher of the Law, probably a Pharisee, who has come to Jesus. *Love God, and love your neighbour*. Both our leaders who decide to send troops, and soldiers themselves should go by this rule.

Loving God is about honestly listening to your inner voice. Deep down in your heart you know who you can trust and follow, and who you cannot. Your own soul will show you where truth is found, and when it is just a pack of lies. Listen carefully to that voice!

Loving our neighbour is about honest and open communication. It does include to correct someone if he or she is clearly doing wrong. As long as possible we should keep that communication alive and open, but at some point we will have to draw a line. That was the point where, for example, reformed elders decided they had to go underground and directly fight the Nazis.

May this be our approach to war and peace: to love God and our neighbour. Doing so we can make our own little step forward between the seemingly inevitable fact of war, and the hope-filled vision of peace that should convert all Scimitars³ into lawn mowers.

Amen.

an Australian and a Polish, flying Avro Lancasters, and 11 USAF Bomb Groups, flying Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses. The RAF marked the 11 drop zones using De Havilland Mosquitos. Apart from a few incidents with Germans shooting handguns at the air planes, it was a peaceful operation.

² That is 608,612 tons of bombs over 165,000 sorties and 6,680 tons of food in 3,300 sorties, according to Wikipedia.

³ 'Scimitar' both refers to a [sword with a curved blade](#) and an [armoured reconnaissance vehicle](#).

Hymn : 'For the healing of the nations' (CH 706)

Offering and Dedication

Prayer of Intercession

Today we remember in prayer,
before you, O God of all people,
and among ourselves,
the wars – old, or new, or forgotten;
the victims – killed, or lost, or wounded;
the leaders – choosing wisely or poorly;
the lands – devastated and torn apart.
God, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Today we mention in prayer,
before you, O God of all nations,
and among ourselves,
the times and places we have been involved in armed conflicts,
some almost forgotten, some still fresh.
We mention Ireland, China, Japan,
France, Belgium, Netherlands,
Norway, Germany, Italy,
North Africa and the Middle East,
Kenya, Malaya, Korea,
Falklands, Balkan, Iraq, Afghanistan –
and we know the list is far from complete.
We thank you for the healing that has come to many of these places,
and we pray for the wounds that are still felt.
God, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Today, O God of healing and reconciliation,
we pray for healing –
 that wounds, scars and memories
 may no longer disable peoples' lives;
we pray for forgiveness –
 that enemies may overcome their divisions
 and misdeeds may be set right;
we pray for our countries and their peoples –
 that they may build strong and healthy communities
 who dare to learn lessons from the past;
we pray for our governments and leaders –
 that they may lead with wisdom,
 and not be blinded by pride or power;
we pray for our media –

that they may help us to gain insight and find truth,
instead of spreading propaganda and fear.

God, in your mercy,
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

In silence we remember
those we know need us
to remember them.

(silence)

So we pray,
humans of flesh and blood as we are,
children of God as we are called to be,
through Jesus Christ,
the living Word.

Amen.

Closing Hymn : 'Put peace into each other's hands' (CH 659)

Blessing