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# **13th November 2022**

# **Proper 28 | Ordinary 33**

# **Remembrance Sunday**

# **The Rev’d Andy Braunston**

Rite of Remembrance

*depending on the time of your service this segment could be moved to suit. We suggest you end this period of the service with the hymn* ***Be Still My Soul, the Lord Is On Thy Side****.*

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.

**The Silence**

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.

*from the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland*

Call to Worship

One: Come with joy and delight to worship the Eternal One.

**Many: We come to worship God.**

One: Come in peace to reconcile with enemies and pray for justice.

**Many: We come to worship God**

One: Come & find life in its fullness, plenty & abundance in the Kingdom of God.

**Many: We come to worship God.**

Prayers of Approach, Confession and Forgiveness

Eternal One we come to sing a new song before You;

we tell of Your wonders which You have wrought amongst us.

We seek, O Most Holy, to make a joyful noise in Your presence,

and with the earth to sing to you, our Creator.

With the streams we clap our hands in praise,

with the hills we skip for joy before You.

Our hearts rejoice as we bring You our praises, O God.

Yet in our praises we know that we’ve failed to live as You command.

Yet in our joy we feel shame as we know we’ve chosen hate not love.

Yet in our singing we know that our world chooses war not peace.

We know that as we worship, You search our hearts, that as we pray

You come to judge Your people, to chastise and redeem, forgive and reform.

So give us grace Eternal One to accept the forgiveness You offer.

Give us time, God of grace, to change our ways.

Give us hope, O Most High, that we can learn from Your judgements. Amen

Prayer for Illumination

Break open your Word to us, Eternal God,

that we may hear, understand, reflect and obey,

that our world may be transformed

into your coming Kingdom. Amen.

Readings

*Isaiah 65:17-25* | *Psalm 98* | St Luke 21:5-19

Sermon Notes

Remembrance Sunday is always difficult as we have many emotions we’re dealing with – the horror of war, remembering and honouring those who’ve died in conflict is always more intense when there’s war on our doorsteps. In the URC we have a strong pacifist tradition which sits alongside a reluctant admission that sometimes war is inevitable. We can see this played out in whether people wish to wear red, white or no poppies. Leaders of worship need to be alive to these sensibilities and the very real fears that are present this year with the war in Ukraine. We realise, perhaps for the first time, that we live in dangerous times.

The writer of the Isaiah passage also lived in dangerous times. Scholars consider Isaiah to be divided into three parts; the first 39 chapters relating to the teachings of a prophet who worked in the 8th Century before Christ, the second part, chapters 40 – 55, an anonymous prophet in the early 6th Century before Christ when the Jews were in Exile in Babylon and the last 10 chapters written when the Jews had returned to Israel in the later parts of the same century. Whilst there are themes which unite the different parts of the book the section we heard today comes from the end of the book where the bold joyful visions about the return from Exile have been replaced with some hard realities of life. These last ten chapters are quite pessimistic as the author deals with wickedness, bloodshed, injustice, worshipping other gods alongside God, oppression of people, profaning the Sabbath and useless leaders who are blind to social realities, greedy or drunk. In the midst of all this the author longs for God’s mercy. In aftermath of war and exile the prophet has a vision of what God will do next. God, the prophet holds, will create a new heaven and a new earth where the people will be joyful, where there will be no more tears or distress, where babies don’t die and where the old live to ripe old ages. Lest you think this is all pie in the sky the writer is very clear about specific physical things – houses will be built, vineyards planted and the grapes will be eaten – it takes years to get vineyards to produce useful crops – and, at the end of the prophecy we have this striking image of the wolf and lion feeding together, the lion turns vegetarian and the serpents will no longer bite. Instead of war, destruction and pain we will be offered a new creation where we live as God intends.

In our Gospel reading Jesus seems to frighten us. In the ancient world the Jewish Temple built by Herod the Great was a wonder of the age. We remember Herod as a butcher but the ancient world knew him as a builder. He enlarged the Temple in a project which started 19 years before Jesus’ birth and doubled its size. The work continued through Jesus’ lifetime by Herod’s successors. It was finally finished in the year 64 yet in the year 70 the Romans tore it down and left it in ruins. It was never rebuilt. When the Temple was destroyed Christians remembered the words we heard today from Jesus as prophecy.

In the time leading up to the destruction of the Temple, and the end of the Jewish state, false prophets emerged offering false hope. It’s not surprising as in desperate times people will believe many strange things. At least 15 people claimed to be the long promised Messiah – most promising to lead a revolt against the despised Romans.

After warning of false leadership Jesus said there would be wars and rumours of wars. In Luke’s version these events were the things that would happen before the Temple was destroyed; in the year 69 the Roman empire was convulsed by civil war, insurrection, and chaos. After two revolts, Nero took his own life in the year 68. After this Galba was made emperor to be deposed, and murdered, by Otho who then took his own life as another claimant, Vitellius, headed towards Rome with an army. Vespasian, the commander of Syria rebelled and deposed Vitellius. More emperors in a year than the UK has had chancellors…

When Jesus mentioned wars and rumours of wars maybe he had this chaotic year where the government changed four times amidst turmoil and bloodshed especially as the Jews seized their chance in the chaos to rebel against Rome and asserted their independence. Of course this ended badly for the Jewish people and the state of Israel and it’s wonderful Temple was destroyed.

Christians have often looked at this passage and understood it as Jesus commenting on what the end of the world would look like - forgetting the history of the Jewish revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Temple which is central to our Gospel passage today. And of course by the year 70 the Church had spread and was undergoing persecution. Christians were seen as subversive who would bring the wrath of the gods on Rome and so were persecuted. Jesus does present persecution as part of what leads up to the destruction of the Temple but as a consequence of the turmoil that would engulf the Roman world.

* Of course the passage has power as we are all aware of wars and rumours of war.
* Of course the passage has power because we’re all aware of how Christians, and many others, are still persecuted our world today.
* Of course the passage has power as we’re all aware of the destruction wreaked by war when temples and towers are still torn down by ruthless brutality.

With Isaiah we long for a world made new but, with Jesus, we’re conscious of the world as it is. These twin themes of hope and reality come into play more than ever at Remembrance when we hope for a world where we no longer resort to war and violence to settle our differences but where we understand the realities that besiege us. We long for the Russian wolf to lie down with the Ukrainian lamb but that doesn’t look like it’s going to happen just yet. We long for Taiwan to be secure and Tibet to be free but the current policies of the Chinese government don’t look like this will soon be a reality. We long for women to be able to dress how they wish in Iran and Saudi Arabia but the patriarchal powers of the day don’t look like they will change. We long for peace but have a lump in our throat every year when we remember those who have died in war, conflict and terror. We look at the poppies, evocative symbols of blood and peace, and wonder how many more names will be added to our memorials.

Yet our readings offer hope. Isaiah does offer a remade world where we live as God intended and Jesus’ words are true. Jesus tells us that in days of persecution and trouble we will be given the words we need to speak, even when we need to speak to power. Jesus and Isaiah’s words of peace and hope, spoken millennia ago still speak to us:

* whilst the Temple that Herod built is no more,
* whilst Herod himself is remembered only really as a butcher,
* and whilst the proud empire which destroyed the Temple lies in ruins.

Jesus’ and Isaiah’s words of hope and peace still stand despite warfare, famine, plague and earthquake.

Affirmation of Faith

*adapted from the Iona Community’s Iona Abbey Worship Book*

**We believe that God is present in the darkness before dawn;**

in the waiting and uncertainty where

fear and courage join hands,conflict and caring link arms,

and the sun rises over barbed wire.

**We believe in a with-us God who shares our humanity.**

We affirm a faith that takes us beyond the safe place:

into action, vulnerability, and onto the streets.

**We commit ourselves to work for change and put ourselves on the line;**

to bear responsibility, take risks, live powerfully and face humiliation;

to stand with those on the edge; to choose life and be used by the Holy Spirit

for God’s new community of hope. **Amen.**

Intercessions

*from the Council of Churches of Britian and Ireland*

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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. Amen.

Offertory

How we use our money expresses a lot about our deepest values. Our nations are now engaged in a political debate about the best way to use money - do we give tax breaks to encourage the rich to invest more so their wealth trickles down to the poorest, or do we redistribute wealth so that the poorest have dignity. These are stark political choices and, over the last 40 years or so, both major parties have opted for a middle way between these choices; now we have to participate in a social experiment to see if wealth will beget wealth. On a personal level we too make choices about our money – the things we spend it on, the causes we support, the realisation that our money, like our other resources, is given to us in trust to use wisely. We may support charities at home or abroad, we may seek to use our money to make the world a better place but now, at this point in the service, we give thanks for the offerings made to the Church – offerings made direct to the bank, here in the collection, offerings of time and talent and treasure; offered to change our world, show a different economic reality and to reflect the values of the kingdom.

Eternal One

long ago you called us to be heralds of your coming kingdom,

to show by our lives and our loves, our talents and our treasure,

your values of love and justice, where all are valued, where none are deprived

and where those who are first are made to wait.

Bless these gifts of money that we may use them wisely and widely,

that your kingdom may come. Amen.

Holy Communion

*adapted from the Roman Missal*

The Lord be with you! **And also with you!**

Lift up your hearts! **We lift them up to the Lord!**

Let us give God our thanks and praise! **It is right to give God our thanks & praise!**

Loving, all-powerful and ever-living God,

we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise.

You never cease to call us to a new and more abundant life.

God of love and mercy, you are always ready to forgive;

we are sinners, and you invite us to trust in your mercy.

Time and time again, we broke your covenant, but you did not abandon us.

Instead through your Son, Jesus our Lord,

you bound yourself even more closely to the human family

by a bond that can never be broken.

Now is the time for your people to turn back to you

and to be renewed in Christ your Son, a time of grace and reconciliation.

You invite us to serve the human family by opening our hearts

to the fullness of your Holy Spirit.

In wonder and gratitude, we join our voices with the choirs of heaven

to proclaim the power of your love and to sing of our salvation in Christ…

*Sung or Said Sanctus – see hymn notes*

Loving God, from the beginning of time,

you have always done what is good for humanity

so that we may be holy as you are holy.

Look with kindness on your people gathered here before you;

send forth the power of your Spirit

so that these gifts may become for us the body and blood

of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ,

in whom we have become your daughters and sons.

When we were lost and could not find the way to you,

you loved us more than ever: Jesus your Son, innocent and without sin,

gave himself into our hands and was nailed to a cross.

Yet before he stretched out his arms between heaven and earth

in the everlasting sign of your covenant,

He desired to celebrate the Passover feast in the company of his disciples.

We remember the night when Jesus, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying: “take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after Supper, he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying: “Drink this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.”

Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith.....

**Christ has died! Christ is Risen! Christ will come again!**

We do this in memory of Jesus Christ, our Passover and lasting peace.

We celebrate his death and resurrection

and look for the coming of that day when he will return to give us the fullness of joy.

Therefore we celebrate, Loving God, ever faithful and true,

the sacrifice which restores humanity to your friendship.

Loving God, look with love on those you have called

to share in the one sacrifice of Christ.

By the power of the Holy Spirit make us one body healed of all division.

Keep us all in communion of mind and heart,

with all the people your son has gained for you.

Help us to work together for the coming of your New Realm,

Until at last we come into your presence to share the life of the saints.

Then, freed from every shadow of death, we shall take our place in the new creation, and give you thanks, with Christ, our Risen Lord.

To prepare ourselves to meet the Lord in Holy Communion let us sing the Lamb of God…

*See music notes for suggestions.*

Post Communion Prayer

*from the Church of England*

God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ proclaimed the kingdom

and restored the broken to wholeness of life:

look with compassion on the anguish of the world, and by your healing power

make whole both people and nations; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Blessing

*from the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland*

God grant to the living grace, to the departed rest,

to the Church, the State, and all people, unity, peace and concord,

and to us, and all God’s servants, life everlasting.

And the blessing of God Almighty,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all

and remain with you always. Amen

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| **Hymn Suggestions** | | | | |
|  | RS | CH4 | StF | MP |
| *Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side* |  | 691 |  |  |
| *Oh Sing A New Song to the Lord (Ps 98)* |  | 61 |  |  |
| *Sing A New Song To the Lord He To Whom…(Ps 98)* |  | 62 |  | 599 |
| *I Have A Dream A Man Once Said* |  | 710 |  |  |
| *I Come With Joy, A Child of God* | 447 | 656 | 588 |  |
| *For the Healing of the Nations* | 620 | 706 | 696 |  |

RS – *Rejoice and Sing*, CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4*, StF – *Singing the Faith*, MP – *Mission Praise*

Further ideas…

Another version of Psalm 98, set to its Geneva tune can be found here

<https://hymnary.org/text/sing_a_new_song_to_the_lord_god_for>

It is good to have sung settings when we celebrate Communion and there are hundreds to choose from; it’s a good way to link us in with the wider Church. The Kevin Mayhew Publications book *Tunes We Know* is a good starting place and has a lot of material in by URC minister Michael Forster. There are sung Holy Holy Holies in RS, CH4 and StF. Further afield there are lots in the RC Celebration Hymnal and Laudate.