

Sunday, November 6, 2022 Pentecost 22 ***“We Will Remember Them”***

Joshua 1:8-9, Psalm 90:1-6, John 11: 17-27

The video “Canada at War: From Vimy to Afghanistan” offers us a glimpse of the horrors of war in the 21st century. But we do not have to look too far back in history to understand that there is war now. Since February 2022 what was deemed a conflict between Russia and Ukraine has so far resulted in the death of 60-80000 Russian troops lost with 6500 Ukrainian people killed and over 9000 injured. The number of people who could have died in Ukraine is unknown as people fled out of the country at a quick pace. But why?

When we look at the reasons for any war we can go back in human history to what is recorded in the Bible. There were many wars, battles and millions of people killed all for the sake of a homeland. Joshua was a known leader of battles in order to gain control of land once owned and settled by others. He led the battle of Jericho and we know the walls came down for his soldiers. But we also know that God calls us to live in peace? So is there a right time to fight for what is right?

Joshua was told by God to enter the land first promised to Moses. The people were not to be afraid for God would be with them as they walked the land which now belonged to them. We read : Be strong and courageous, do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

One can imagine what was in the hearts of all the soldiers/ airmen/ navy sailors as they prepared to do battle alongside allies against a common enemy. They were afraid and they also knew in many occasions that their friends would not and did not make it home with them.

On this Sunday before Remembrance Day we need to take time to honour those who gave up their lives for the sake of others. We need to lift up those who are currently serving in the Canadian Forces not knowing if/when they could be called to battle. We also need to give thanks that we live in a country that remembers our war dead, not as heroes but as valiant soldiers who faced enemies with strength. But we also need to remember God’s call to us all to live in peace.

We need to have peace for “without peace, it will not be possible to achieve the levels of trust, cooperation and inclusiveness needed for societies to be resilient to shocks, manage disputes and adapt to changes in their environments” (Visions of Humanity.org)

But how is peace possible? By faith, real, lasting peace comes only from Jesus. It cannot be obtained through following the advice of self-help books, by adopting a positive mental attitude or by self-medicating with alcohol or drugs. It comes from Jesus who has overcome the world for our sake in order that we might experience the fullness of his presence in our lives.

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life! Though they die yet shall they live. And everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Jesus gives us life and because He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, we have been offered this peace from within. The peace that endures within our hearts and minds always.

As we honour the fallen soldiers of the past we need to remember that their deaths in battle impacted the course of human history. Those who survived returned home forever changed and often kept the stories of their experiences to themselves. We need only study history to realize the challenges that were overcome in order for victory to be proclaimed. And these stories are from both men and women who answered the call. Women moved from in the house to working in factories and businesses along with continuing to raise their children. Without men available to work, they took on newer roles and were given an opportunity to ‘do their part’. They also served in special units of the forces- for we must remember Queen Elizabeth II served in the motor corps in the British Army.

And as time rolls on, stories of where people served emerge in order that a new perspective of serving one’s country is learned. Such is the case of Fern Blodgett Sunde originally from Coburg who after 18 months of night school training went to Montreal and applied as a wireless operator aboard a Norwegian merchant ship/food carrier. She was qualified and determined and was the first woman who served as a wireless operator aboard this Norwegian ship. The Norwegians did not restrict women aboard warships at sea. Her work was to listen non-stop on the radio for coded messages that were received in different waves.

Later on Fern married the captain of this ship and after the war they settled in Norway and raised two daughters.

We remember the people who served because their commitment to serve their country enables us to live in freedom in Canada and we again can welcome those who seek refuge and strength from others. As Canadians we can still offer the peace of Christ and mean it because we believe that He has overcome the world and is the One whom we need to see us into the years to come.

Changes are all around us – economic climate political even social and of course what we deem as Church/ Christian. What are we called to say and do as we strive to live out Christ's teaching to live and love? What might we say to others who seek peace today? And what might remembering those who served in battle call us to do in this moment?

The Psalmist writes, God has been our refuge in every generation. Even though time to God is not measured like we understand it, God is with us through all of our days. We are then to praise God for this and to follow his guidance and way of living. In every age God has been our refuge.. This is one thing we know that will not change. To know peace then is to rely on God; to know peace is to know that God is in control, and to know peace within is to know the One Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. Through Christ alone we may live. Thanks be to God.

Prayer:

God of grace and love we praise you and we thank you. We pray that you as the Lord of peace will give us peace at all times and in every way. (2 Thessalonians 3:16) Amen.