

Sunday, November 11, 2018

Hebrews 9:124-28

Mark 12:38-44

Bells of Peace

On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I came to an end following the signing of an armistice between the Allies and Germany that called for a ceasefire effective at 11 a.m.— it was on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. The terms of the agreement included the immediate German withdrawal from enemy territories, disarmament and demobilization of the German military, and the release of Allied prisoners. The terms of the armistice were harsh for Germany, but the country had little choice but to accept. Its allies had all surrendered in the previous two months and its military was depleted. Kaiser Wilhelm, who had led the country into war, abdicated on Nov. 10, and the new government, headed by Friedrich Ebert, was eager for peace. The armistice, drafted in three days in the Allied war zone in France's Compiègne Forest, was not intended to be a permanent peace treaty. The four Allied powers (Britain, France, Italy and the United States) met in Paris to draft a formal peace treaty. Germany was not asked to participate. The resulting Treaty of Versailles imposed severe punitive measures against Germany, forcing its leaders to accept guilt for the war, pay billions in dollars, relinquish 10 percent of its territory as well as its colonies, and agree to restrictions on its military. Germany, which was in no position to continue the war, had little choice but to sign the treaty.

This was the end of the war to end all wars. It was a time of peace and there was joy in the cities and communities around the nation as their veterans were coming home. That night in Europe bells in churches and schools rang out marking the end of war and the beginning of a new time in history. Today 100 years later, bells will ring across Canada and around the world at the going down of the sun, and we will remember them. We will also be ringing bells this morning- to signify the end of WWI but to also ring in our memory as to why bells were rung so long ago—for peace.

ON this Remembrance Sunday we need to remember, think, and reflect upon the sacrifice of the thousands of people, real people of all ages who died in the air, in the trenches or at sea fighting for what they believed to be worth it all. Peace, harmony and equality of people around the world. For many young men thought the trip to fighting in Europe was an

adventure of a lifetime with the hope to be home by Christmas but for so many their bodies were buried in foreign land.

In our reading from Mark 12 Jesus shares his observations as he sits in the synagogue watching the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. He watched as many rich people threw in large amounts of money. But he focused upon a poor widow who came and offered what she had. How did Jesus know she was a poor widow? She was alone as she made the offering- no man was beside her or putting the money in for him. This would have been a traditional role for the male of the household—to make the donations to the temple. But this woman was alone. How did Jesus know she was poor? It could have been by her clothing, her shawls being ragged looking or even her appearance—maybe she was super skinny= with evidence of not having eaten or eaten well recently. We just know that she was poor and alone. But what Jesus observes her doing is just tremendous. He sees that she has given two very small copper coins worth only a fraction of a penny. Jesus then calls the disciples to him and states, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything- all she had to live on.”

Out of very little she gave her all to what she believed was important—the temple and its mission. Out of a minimal amount of money she put it all towards the temple. Where did she get this money? We don't know exactly but what she had, she gave to the temple.

As we remember war veterans today who died at the hands of former enemies, we cannot help to think about how they gave of themselves. They gave their all—mind, body, soul and spirit—their whole lives for the sake of others. They went for an adventure with the hope of returning to live a peace filled life back at home. But instead they died for the sake of others.

When we think of this sacrifice we cannot help to remember Jesus' death as well. But there is a huge difference. Jesus was not under gunfire when he died, he was put on a cross as a result of his accusation of treason which the people cried out for his death as punishment. Jesus died, was buried according to custom of that time yet what we as Christians believe, he lives again. Those soldiers died yes, but through faith we pray for them to have eternal rest with Christ. Yet with Jesus we know he is alive for he was seen by over 500 people before he

returned to God the Father in heaven. And as we read from Hebrews 9, Jesus died to take away the sins of many people. He will come again but when he comes it is to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Jesus' death was not an accident. He knew that he would have to die at the hands of people; people who had sinned against God. And it is he alone who had to make this sacrifice as God's Son and as God who dwelt amongst us. He was human and divine. And he alone died for our sakes so that we might live eternally.

The veterans died for the sake of a peaceful life on Earth, but Jesus died for all of our eternity. Both were self-sacrifices, for the sake of others and for the sake of our life here on earth while the other is for our life everlasting. The sacrifice of our veterans was for our temporary home to be peaceful while Jesus' death and resurrection was for our eternal life.

As we remember the end of World War I with the ringing of the bells; let us pray for peace. As we listen to the bells sounding with joy as they rang out the end of the Great War to end all wars; let us pray for the many caught in crossfire- living in refugee camps, waiting to be sponsored, waiting for a chance at a better life waiting to live. As we listen to the bells let us pray within ourselves to give love to others without counting the cost. And let us pray for peace within. As we listen to the bells of peace let us pray for the world's people and that they might know God in faith and with hope.

Let us pray.

God of grace we praise you for your gift to us in Jesus Christ who died and rose to new life so that we might live eternally with you. We remember the sacrifices of thousands of men and women and their families who fought, died or were injured and returned home forever changed. We pray O God that on this remembrance day for peace to not only reign when the bells sound around the world, but that peace would remain forever. We ask this as we pray to you. AMEN.