

***“They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11.9)***

This weekend, people from all over the country have joined together to do one thing: remember. We remember those who went off to war, never to return, and we remember those who came back with unhealable wounds. We remember the families which were shattered, and those which continue to be shattered by the horrors of war. We remember the atrocities that took place so that future generations might not be inclined to perpetuate them again. And as we remember all those people around the world who continue this very day to be subjected to violence, the heavy human price that has been paid to bring peace. The trauma of the First World War was significant for our relatively new, young nation of Canada. The depth to which it shattered families and entire communities had never been experienced before, and Armistice Day was recalled year after year to ensure it didn't need to happen again. “The War to End All Wars”, they said. But, when has that actually ever been true since?

Sinful humans that we are continue to make war and destruction: we always have and perhaps we always will. But this weekend is meant to remind us of the very real, very human sacrifices that have been made in the name of hope: hope that evil forces in the world would be stopped in their tracks. And we remember not just those who have served in the World Wars, but also in every conflict since then, too. We remember in Canada especially Korea, Bosnia, and Afghanistan, in addition to all of the United Nations and NATO missions over the years. We remember those who served, those who died, and those who returned with physical and mental injuries. We remember the sacrifice of families: of wives, children, and parents who sent away their young men unsure if they'd ever see them again.

It is a heavy thing, to remember. For some, it is healing. For others, it brings back bad memories. But when we look at the world and the chaos that humans make possible, when we remember, we choose to learn from the mistakes of the past, and try to do our best not to repeat them.

The word “remember” has a particular significance to Christians. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we hear the words of Jesus who said: “do this in *remembrance* of me”. Bless the bread and the cup, and drink and eat them to remember me – to recall me, to remind yourself of me. But a second etymology of this word means that we are re-remembering Christ's passion: we are putting it back together again, reassembling it, reliving it, even bringing it back to life. This is one of the keys to our Christian theology of the Eucharist – that we bring Jesus literally to the table in that the bread and wine actually become his body and blood. We re-live the night of his passion, and through it we can participate with him in his death and resurrection. It is a wonderful gift we have: to remember – in all of its meanings. To be part of Christ, to recall his sacrifice, to remind ourselves of his presence and the salvation which his sacrifice delivered to us.

The Peace of God – the Peace of Christ – is greater than any human peace. Jesus says in John 14: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27). The world's peace can only continue in the way of the world. It is embroiled with human sinfulness and difficulties and is always subjected to a pattern of repetition. It is fragile, easily broken, and in some cases it is precariously one sneeze away from snapping. But Jesus' peace transcends our human understanding, it changes the ways of the world and reconciles all of the world to God.

Take our Old Testament lesson from today, for example. Here we have a prophecy about the coming Messiah being the righteous root of Jesse (or, of David). He shall be deeply rooted in the Lord, with the Lord's spirit resting upon him. He possesses a wisdom beyond anything of the earth, and he speaks God's power. Above all things he is righteous before God, and faithful. The

prophecy carries on to say when he comes to rule the earth, a new kind of unfathomable peace will exist in the world where “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb... the leopard shall lie down with the young goat... the cow and the bear shall graze... the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” The prey and the predator shall be at peace with one another and live in harmony. The carnivores even eat the grass, not the animals. “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” The knowledge of the Lord changes even what we perceive to be the natural order of the living world. The violence inherent in creation shall vanish. But is this now? Is this what we are experiencing? No. But it is the promise we have – it is the future we seek. When Jesus comes again to rule the earth and sit on the judgement seat of God, then the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. But until then, we live in this world of sin, of brokenness. Where peace is fragile and doesn’t last.

That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t strive to bring about lasting peace in the world, that doesn’t mean that we have no hope that it’s possible. It’s just a reality we face, that brokenness will continue in the world until that last day. In fact, we have the most hope that this *will* happen, for it has been promised to us, and the Resurrection is proof of the promises coming true.

When God reluctantly had Saul anointed to be the first king over Israel, he warned the people that the king would have command over their children, and that they would be subjected to his commands even to the point of death. God sanctioned the kingly rule because it was petitioned of him from the people’s free will, but he still warned them of the dangers they would face by having somebody other than himself be their ruler. In this same thread, Jesus tells his followers that they are to give to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and give to God that which is God’s. The civil laws of the world, the human leaders we appoint and elect, were petitioned of the people from God, and so he gave them authority over us. That authority in worldly things: setting laws, excising taxes, raising armies, is still within the realm of man. But God demands of us what is *his*. “And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee.” We are called, nay we are *commanded* to commit our whole beings to God because they were created of God. We give all of our money and worldly goods to whomever in the world lawfully requests it, but our spiritual beings, we owe to God. This is consistent in Jesus’ message to drop everything and follow him.

So as we remember this weekend the valiant sacrifices made by those who went before us to stand up in the face of evil and remember that they answered the call of Caesar, we can remember that the peace they fought and died for is merely a foretaste of the peace we will experience at the resurrection of the dead. This does not invalidate what has been done, but rather the experience of war is a reminder to the living how important it is that we know a loving God. We pray for all those who have served and their families, that the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding might be made known in the world. And we do give thanks to God that we live in a peaceful part of the world.

As we remember, and re-live, the horrors of war, let us also commend to God all that continues this very day. And pray that his peace may be ushered into our broken world so that unbearable violence can stop and that we might see a day when war is no more. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s, for “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Phil. 3.20).

May we remember so that the sacrifices of so many who were called to arms were not in vain, and that the peace they fought for might be truly achieved.

May they rest in peace. Amen.