

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : November 9th, 2020
“Third Sunday before Advent”

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2020

“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died”.

So writes Paul to the Thessalonians in our epistle for today, Remembrance Sunday. Nationally 2020 is the conclusion of the Centennial tributes for the 100th anniversary of the First World War – and Wednesday sees a service on BBC1 reflecting 100 years since the funeral of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey and the original unveiling of the Cenotaph war memorial on Whitehall. Although this day was originally intended to remember and commemorate those who died as a result of war, it is also inevitable that for many it is a day when we remember all our loved ones. For me personally, 2020 is a significant year. It’s the year that my Father (blinded in the 2nd World War) would have been 100. It is also 50 years since my beloved maternal Grandmother died – and 10 years since my Mother began her steep decline into dementia before her death within the year.

But we do our remembering in a particular way – because we try to remember with hope – hope that as “we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died”. The Christian hope remains strong. Death is not the end but a transition to new life. We

remember today with thanksgiving, looking back if we can, but most of all we look forward to resurrection.

In our Gospel reading today, the story contrasts the foolish and the wise bridesmaids. When the bridegroom finally appears, the wise are ready and go to the wedding, but the foolish are not and so miss out on their opportunity.

As Christians, we know we must always be ready to give an account of our lives at any time. There are no days off in Christian discipleship, no limited hours of service. We cannot rewrite the conditions of being a disciple of Christ just to suit ourselves. No, we have to be prepared to live each day ready for adventure in Christian discipleship, for to be unprepared may make all the difference for someone who needs our help or our prayers or our practical support.

So today we remember those who have given their lives for our freedom and we pledge to continue to pursue peace – and whilst we cannot affect the world as can our governments and leaders, we can work tirelessly in our community, amongst the neighbours we know and the strangers we don't know – for each of us is capable of making a difference because of how we live our lives.

It is why this evening's simple All Souls Service is one of the most significant services we hold here at Christ Church, even if this year we can only worship together via Zoom. During the short service everyone is invited to light a candle, lighting a small symbol of hope at a dark time in their lives as they mourn the death of someone they love and as they cling onto the hope of life after death. May we as the Christian community here be the living symbols of light in the midst of the darkness that many in our world experience – particularly those who feel they have no hope. Amen.