

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : Remembrance Sunday
Sunday 13th November 2022

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2022

Preached by Michael Burns

As I look back over the decades of my parish ministry, I think back to countless Remembrance Services that I have been privilege to lead. One of my first was in Shropshire in the village of Jackfield where the war memorial was in fact a footbridge over the River Severn – a really vital and useful way to connect people which also served as a construction of remembrance. I also remember that there was a period when people were questioning whether today should continue. It is all credit to those who campaigned that it does – and perhaps even more strongly than in the past. That is in part due to the wars which continue to rage in many parts of our world. So it is right what we pay tribute not just to those who died as a result of two world wars but also to those who are still involved today in serving in the armed services. I've a godson who serves in the Royal Navy – and many of you will have relatives who serve in a similar way. And it is not just amongst the armed services where young people serve. Our police and security services are waging a constant war against those whose aim is to disrupt the peace of our country, of our world. There is undoubtedly a great deal of work and effort that goes on unseen – about which we will never know the full facts.

So this morning we will be remembering both the known and the unknown men and women down the ages who have worked and continue to work towards securing our peace – including the countless millions who have given their lives or who have been injured in the service of their country. Many men and women will have heard a call to serve in the armed services. Many in the past won't have had any choice over the matter but there are equally many today who will have had a choice to serve their country in this way and who have made their decision for the good of others. Their obedience to this call is vital for the saving of many.

So today we remember – we give thanks for the sacrifice of the many who enable us to live in peace. And if we feel at times that the world is not a particularly peaceful place, just stop and think. Think what it would be like if there had not been the men and women who have given and who continue to give their lives in order to work, often unseen, to preserve the peace of our world. May God protect us all.

One final thought for this morning. Remember that the Two Minutes Silence is in itself a significant act of remembrance. The silence provides an opportunity to remember those who have suffered in war and how we can work for a peaceful world.

Victor Frankl, a victim of Auschwitz, suggested that the most intolerable of all human conditions is not imprisonment or hunger, but lack of meaning. The two minutes of silence enables us to connect with Jesus' message, which offers true meaning to our lives and world. He spoke of giving ourselves in love for each other and the world: 'Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you'. He also demonstrated such love in sacrificing His own life: 'Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. When observing the silence, let's use it to reflect on this sacrificial love, as we call to mind those who have laid down their lives.

In our busy lives, where so much clamours for our attention, silence gives us an opportunity to reflect on our priorities and rediscover true meaning in our lives. This is not just for Remembrance Sunday, as Jesus often withdrew to find silence to seek God.

Let's all try to use silence in our lives as space to seek God's will and offer ourselves to Him, just as did those who gave themselves in conflicts down the years. May this Remembrance Sunday help us to grow closer in our lives to God.