

Remembrance 2023
Stapleford 12th November 2023
Rev'd Jonathan Plows



Micah 4: 1 – 5
John 15: 9 – 17

We have gathered this morning to **remember**:

To *remember* those from our villages who *served* in the conflicts of the last centuries, and those especially who paid the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

More widely, to *remember* all those who bear the scars from warfare, peace keeping missions, acts of terrorism ~ as well as the countless innocent victims of violence and conflict ~ then and now.

And, in our *remembering*, we look back across the generations and our gratitude is exhausted when we think of those who have *given of themselves for others*.

Those who were lost ~ were lost to us, and we are profoundly grateful.

Remembering ... is a profound *calling* under God.

The prophets called the people to *remember* what God **had** done, in judgment and in blessing, to ground their very **present** and to live in the *promise* of the Kingdom **to come**.

Micah remembered the agony of God's judgement upon sinful, broken, Israel ~ where Jerusalem and the Temple would become a heap of ruins and the sinful would cry in anguish.

And yet Micah prophesies, that in His Grace and Mercy, God **will** come to comfort and offer hope to His people ...

"It shall come to pass ... in days to come ..." that the dis-membered people will be **re-membered** in the blessings of God's **peace and justice**, when *all* people will **obediently** come to the Lord walking the path of **righteousness**, to **abide, dwell**, in the steadfast love of the Lord.

God **will** judge ... and *then*

the people, their hearts **turned**, *will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

In remembering what has gone before **we** too ground **our** present in the work of peace and justice in the **hope** of a better tomorrow.

In our **remembering** we see a new heaven and a new earth.

Jesus is explicit: in keeping **His** commandments we **will abide** in **His Love** ~ the Love which both blesses, transforms and empowers for "*Without me you can do nothing truly good*"

In such Love, God can do **extraordinary** things with **ordinary** people ~ people like us: Jesus said as much

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jesus made this *extraordinarily* tough statement in the shadow of His Crucifixion: that He was to lay down His life for us.

What tough Love: for friends but most especially for those we find more difficult to Love.

Love then is ***a fruit of the Spirit:***

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

If you abide in me, you will bear fruit.

Abiding in the Love of Jesus means **trusting** in His Word and **living out** His Truth ~ to feel the weight of the Cross upon our own shoulders ~ for "*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.*"

It is the Truth of His Love that we are **re-membered** in new life and **re-assured** of a new heaven and a new earth.

This very day, nations are entrenched against other nations; peace-keepers are retreating and divisive ideologies are challenging international order.

Is peace still possible in our day? We may be hesitant to believe such a thing.

Micah's message remains relevant.

For the prophet reminds us that in God our *hearts* can be changed ~ and in that **new reality**, we must work to **re-fashion** the implements of war and usher in God's **just peace**.

Micah's rejects, **as we must, all false** prophets of superficial and deceptive peace.

Micah promises a **peace** forged when our **brokenness** is redeemed, cleansed and re-membered by God ~ to enable us to become dispensers of Love, Compassion and Mercy **to others**.

Jesus' teaching is clear:

God is the originator of Love.

Not merely a saving love ~ but an **abiding** Love.

The Love which **calls** us, **challenges** us, to **do extraordinary** things ~ not big or life-threatening things ~ but the Love within every little act of service, every act of peace, every just relationship born afresh or sustained ~ in the Love for the outcast, the unwashed and the unknown Samaritan.

This Love is utterly **unconditional**. This is the Love of the Christ who died **to** self to enable each one of **us** to have Life.

Isn't this what we remember today?

**When you go home tell them of us and say:
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.**

On this day, we remember with gratitude all who served, suffered, undertook acts of immense courage, bravery and sacrifice **for each one of us**.

We remember and we give thanks.

This day reminds us that we too are called ~ called to live out Jesus' commandment to do extraordinary things in Love ~ in our heart, our family, in our community.

To be **absolute** and **unconditional** advocates for the justice and peace the Prophets called for but in the here and now.

In answering this call, in this abiding Love, we create the necessary conditions for swords to become ploughshares;
for Truth to overcome Falsehood
and solidarity to overcome division.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

This is our today – and our tomorrow. Amen.