

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Ecclesiastes 3 verse 1 tells us 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.'

Today it is a time for remembrance.

It is now ninety-eight years since the guns fell silent after the war to end all wars. Unfortunately, we know all too well this hope has not been fulfilled and perhaps this is one reason why it is so important for us to remember. We have just remembered in the silence at the War Memorial those who gave their lives for the freedom which we sometimes take for granted today.

Silence is the true language of remembrance. But there are two kinds of silence.

One is because no one wants to communicate. This is the frosty, thick, awkward, hostile, silence which is an outward expression of irreconcilable hostility. Such silence is a form of shouting. And it is often a prelude to violence. The guns and bombs begin only after the talking has stopped.

The other sort of silence is calm and mutual, it is the recognition that what matters is so much more than we can ever say that we ought to honour that fact by being quiet.

The silence of Remembrance Sunday is this sort of silence. It is the recognition that in order to do justice to what has happened, to do justice to the cost of war – its sacrifice and shame - we do not need to tell another story or sing another song. Rather we need to be silent together.

We know too that the power of remembrance is that while it connects us with sadness it also inspires us with hope.

Today we remember all those who have fallen in wars present and past. It is eternally important that we remind ourselves of the dreadful cost of war if we are ever to live in peace; and if we are to fulfil Jesus' command in our Gospel reading, 'That you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'.

Our focus today is quite rightly on those whose lives have been given and taken away, and those who today still risk life and limb in the service of their country, and in the pursuit of peace. But what we must not do is fall into the trap of thinking that peace making and peacekeeping can be left solely to the

professionals: the army, the navy, the air force, the marines, the politicians, the decision makers of the world, as if the pursuit of peace were a specialist activity that can safely be left to others. It is our duty – all of us – as children of God to be peacemakers, to work to break the continual spiral of violence and aggression which causes so much destruction and death and grieves the heart of God.

In illustration Archbishop Justin tells this story. As Christians we are called to strive for peace in our world and on Remembrance Day, we make a fresh commitment to being people who work for peace.

But it can be easy to think, as ordinary people, “What can I do to stop the wars in our world?” On 14 November 1940, Coventry was bombed very heavily and Coventry Cathedral burned. One of the cathedral’s senior staff, Dick Howard, was a man of great personal integrity. He had promised the residents of Coventry as they went off to fight that he would keep their regimental flags safe in the cathedral until they returned from war. As the cathedral burned, he went in again and again to retrieve their flags. He kept his promise.

In the days that followed, he wrote on the ruined wall behind the destroyed high altar the words ‘Father forgive’. In his Christmas Day sermon that year he said, ‘After the war we must build a more Christ-like world.’

Meanwhile in the days after the bombing, a member of the cathedral picked up the nails that had fallen from the burning roof – and turned them into crosses. That cross became the symbol of reconciliation. From Coventry Cathedral, a network of peace-making centres spread around the world. So as we make our acts of commitment this year, remember that the people who struggled for peace were an unheard of middle aged clergyman, a verger, the people of Coventry, and people around the world. They just did what they could do in their place, in the service of Christ. So let us commit ourselves to work as hard as we can for peace, both here and throughout God’s beautiful but broken world.

Let us pray; merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us not yet cast out by your perfect love. May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people – and live lives of justice, courage and mercy, through Jesus Christ our risen redeemer. **Amen.**