



## Prayer for Remembrance Sunday

Welcoming God,  
in Jesus Christ, you showed up in our world,  
and showed us what it means to be fully and truly alive;  
as we gather together before you today,  
to worship and to remember,  
open our hearts and prepare our minds to meet with you,  
and to be changed by the love we find.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen**

## Poem – *In Flanders Fields*

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow  
between the crosses, row on row,  
that mark our place: and in the sky  
the larks, still bravely singing, fly  
scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
loved and were loved, and now we lie  
in Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
to you from failing hands we throw  
the torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die  
we shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
in Flanders' Fields.

## 'Starter for Ten' Discussion Question

What does 'remembrance' mean to you? What sorts of things spring to mind when you hear the word?

## Prayers of Thanks and Praise

God of hope,  
you made human beings to reflect your life and light.  
Even when we prefer to hide in the darkness,  
you seek us out, and call us to turn around and return to you.  
We praise you because we're fearfully and wonderfully made  
and because we're never beyond the reach of your love.  
Thank you for sending your Son  
to show us how to live,  
and through his cross and resurrection,  
opening up the Way of peace, of reconciliation,  
of flourishing and life.  
In Jesus' name, and in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
we bring to you our thanks and praises.  
**Amen**

## Prayers of Renewal

Let us pray:

God of peace, forgive us  
for taking part in that which turns people against each other,  
for times when we've fuelled anger and sought revenge,  
for not heeding your call to love one another.  
**Forgive us and help us.**

God of healing, restore us  
when we're wounded by the words and actions of others,  
when we feel overwhelmed by sadness, anger or grief,  
when remembering is just too painful.

**Restore us and help us.**

God of life, inspire us  
to trust in the hope that your love brings,  
to have the courage to see past war and violence,  
to seek to mend fractured relationships.

**Inspire us and help us.**

God of new beginnings,  
forgive us, restore us and inspire us,  
that we might be channels of your peace, justice and mercy,  
and make a difference in our world.  
In Jesus' name, we pray.

**Amen**

**Act of Remembrance** (including two minutes' silence)

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
we will remember them.

**We will remember them.**

**Reading** Mark 13:1 – 8

**Sermon**

In today's really challenging reading, which concludes our year-long journey through Mark's Gospel, Jesus told four of his closest friends not to be alarmed, when hearing news of wars and rumours of wars.

They were sat together upon the side of the Mount of Olives, a place long associated with judgement and the coming of the Messiah, and were looking back across to the Jerusalem Temple. King Herod was in the middle of rebuilding and expanding it, with work ongoing while Jesus and friends were there, and it made for an impressive outlook with its supersize stonework and elaborate buildings. Yet, when one of the disciples remarked about its vastness, he told them that none of the stones would be left on top of another, as that whole complex would be destroyed (Mark 13:2). The two sets of brothers – Andrew and Peter, James and John – asked Jesus privately about when the destruction would happen, and what signs they needed to watch out for (13:4). In response, and likely in reference both to the demise of the Temple and the coming in all its fullness of the Kingdom of God, he warned them about false Messiahs, widespread turbulence, and natural disasters (13:5 – 8). This included the outbreak of wars, with all the predictable consequences thereof.

Now, we need to be careful about reading too much into the specific details of this passage and interpreting contemporary events as the fulfilment of its apocalyptic references. However, it nonetheless has the power to speak into the world as it is today. Faced with the threat of a particularly tough winter for the NHS, the ongoing climate crisis, many countries experiencing both high rates of Covid-19 infections, and challenges with vaccinations, and millions of people around the world having been displaced by wars, poverty, hostile environments and discrimination, it is hard *not* to feel alarmed right now. In periods of crisis, it is all too easy to turn to those promising us easy solutions and restoration of past glories, as evidenced by the rise of populism and nationalism across the world, including in the UK. Yet, we need only to glance briefly at the shameful history of the twentieth century to see where this can lead, and the human costs of warfare and the dehumanisation of others are laid bare in poetry, museums, and the testimony of those who survived massacres such as the Holocaust.

Thus, amid the turbulence and widespread anxieties of this age, the calling to be agents of peace looms larger than ever, and has taken on a fresh sense of urgency.

As we remember those killed in wars around the world, the best way to honour the sacrifices made is arguably to work for real peace with all the energy we can muster. This does not only mean the absence of fighting and bloodshed, although that would be a good beginning! It also means actively forging new bonds, across those things which readily divide us, so that we might learn to see the humanity in those whose experiences and outlooks are different to ours. When we see such people as just an abstract 'other' and reduce them to problems to be 'fixed', it leaves too little room for empathy and understanding, and squeezes out the possibility of real relationship and an enlarged vision of what it means to bear the image of God. This doesn't mean that anything goes. We'll also need to challenge the injustice of any and all attempts to diminish and deny the human dignity of sections of the population just because of who they are, and to take seriously the effects of a very human but deeply destructive tendency to seek out scapegoats when things go wrong. Yet, it does mean having the courage to seek Christ in those we find difficult, or even threatening, and it goes without saying that this is not an easy business.

The bottom line here is that we don't live in a perfect world. Ongoing wars and rumours of wars are facts of life this side of the coming of the Kingdom of God in all of its fullness. Our task is to embody hope, by showing that there is a different way to be, that breaks seemingly endless cycles of violence and retribution and creates the space for real peace to emerge. Holding fast to the promises of Jesus that are guaranteed by his resurrection from the dead is liberating, because it means we know the ultimate direction of travel. Wars and violence and tears and grief will not have the last word, and even in the midst of the turbulence Jesus reminded the first disciples (and indeed, us) will come, we can find sure ground upon which to stand. It is natural

to feel alarmed in the face of such things, but trusting in God means we need not be overwhelmed by the waves coming at us. This is at the core of our reading for today, and as we remember those who've died in the conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has the potential to give us the strength and courage we need to be folks who work for real peace. As we seek to honour the sacrifice of those who have served and continue to serve today, may we commit once again to build communities shaped by God's love and peace. Amen

### Prayers of Intercession

In this time of remembrance and reflection,  
we hold before you those serving in our armed forces,  
those working to care for the wounded and suffering,  
the families separated from loved ones stationed abroad,  
and those who have died serving their countries.  
Help us to honour the sacrifices made by working for peace,  
and being true people of hope.

In a world blighted by wars and intractable conflicts,  
God of peace, **may your will be done.**

Where fragile ceasefires struggle to contain violent impulses,  
God of peace, **may your will be done.**

When people are forced to abandon their homes and flee,  
God of peace, **may your will be done.**

For those bearing the physical and emotional scars of war,  
God of peace, **may we be bearers of hope.**

For veterans who find themselves living on the streets,  
God of peace, **may we be bearers of hope.**

For asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced folk,  
God of peace, **may we be bearers of hope.**

In a time of silence, we bring those people and situations particularly on our hearts and in our memories today to you...

### Lord's Prayer

### Poem – *MCMXIV* by Phillip Larkin

Those long uneven lines  
Standing as patiently  
As if they were stretched outside  
The Oval or Villa Park,  
The crowns of hats, the sun  
On moustached archaic faces  
Grinning as if it were all  
An August Bank Holiday lark;  
And the shut shops, the bleached  
Established names on the sunblinds,  
The farthings and sovereigns,  
And dark-clothed children at play  
Called after kings and queens,  
The tin advertisements  
For cocoa and twist, and the pubs  
Wide open all day;  
And the countryside not caring:  
The place-names all hazed over  
With flowering grasses, and fields  
Shadowing Domesday lines  
Under wheat's restless silence;  
The differently-dressed servants  
With tiny rooms in huge houses,  
The dust behind limousines;  
Never such innocence,  
Never before or since,

As changed itself to past  
Without a word – the men  
Leaving the gardens tidy,  
The thousands of marriages,  
Lasting a little while longer:  
Never such innocence again.

### Blessing

God be your comfort and strength,  
God be your hope and support,  
God be your light and your way;  
and the blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
remain with you and all whom you love and pray for,  
now and for ever. **Amen**