

## Reflection for Remembrance Sunday 13th November 2022 by Megan Cambridge

Both of our Old Testament readings this morning were written in dire times. Scholars credit the psalm to Moses, making it one of the oldest psalms. Because of the lines in verse 10 they suggest that this psalm is written during the long years of wandering in the wilderness. Psalm 90 is a lament for the people of God in the face of an unspecified disaster. The people are in distress and God seems far from them. They are calling on Him to have pity on them and bless them.

Job we know has suffered great loss and the verses we heard this morning come in the middle of a back and forth conversation between Job and his friends during which he details the ways in which God's actions have hurt him. He accuses both God and his friends of being his persecutors. He speaks for every believer who has been beaten down by evil and adversity in great ways or small. However, despite all this his faith remains and he asserts his surety that, despite the 'hand of God' being on him, he will, after death, see God.

Moving us forward in time now to other words written in response to desperate times which will echo around churches and at war memorials and Acts of Remembrance throughout the country.

**They shall grow not 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.**

The words of 'For the Fallen' written by Laurence Binyon and first published in the Times in September 1914 adopted as a tribute to all casualties of war.

We have had nearly two weeks of remembering; all saints and all souls and now our own Acts of Remembrance across the Isla, Spey, Deveron group of churches and at war memorials in our local communities. Services to honour the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, Veterans and their families. We wear our poppies inspired by the bright red Flanders's poppy which still grew amongst the chaos and destruction (and yes other colours of poppy are available). What happens when we take our poppies off and lay them down?

How we remember and what we do with our remembering, matters. What we do on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday matters. If we just put our remembering, along with our poppies to one side, then we have not remembered rightly this weekend. Right remembering is about more than setting aside a day in a year to remind ourselves of the facts. Remembering rightly is about how we live in the light of those facts. Especially today as a community and as a nation.

So how will we remember honourably? In the light of our remembering today and tomorrow, how will you, and will we, resolve in our lives to be on Tuesday or a week tomorrow?

The primary hope of that first Armistice Day in 1918, was that the first World War would have been "the war to end all wars," and (to quote the prophet Micah) that people would "... beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Unfortunately, over 100 years after 1918, that hope is still a distant dream. Soldiers are still dying, or coming home disabled in mind or in body. War itself has not stopped and we pray fervently for wars, civil wars and oppression to end - for peace to come.

War has, however, changed – it's become smaller, more intimate, and it causes more civilian suffering. A UNICEF website has this to say: "Modern warfare is often less a matter of confrontation between professional armies than one of grinding struggles between military and civilians in the same country, or between hostile groups of armed civilians. More and more wars are essentially low-intensity internal conflicts, and they are lasting longer.... Civilian fatalities in wartime climbed from 5 per cent at the turn of the 20th century, to 15 per cent during World War I, to 65 per cent by the end of World War II, to more than 90 per cent in the wars of the 1990s." As a result there are more displaced people in the world today than there were at the end of WWII.

So, what exactly are we doing on this Remembrance Day? What exactly do we want our children to continue to do?

In the Old Testament the people of God, the Israelites, were forever being called by God to remember – to remember who they were, where they had come from – and it was usually at times in their life when things were going wrong. That call to remember wasn't about just reminding themselves how they had got into their current mess, it was also a call, more than that, a promise to a future that would be different. Perhaps today, then, God would also say to us – as you remember don't forget your future, don't get stuck with the facts, however sacred, in a way that causes you to forget you have a future. For right remembering, honourable remembering we must have a vision for the future.

God's ultimate promise for us is that God will dwell with us, there will be no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain – we will get out of our cycles of violence and war because all of that has been gathered up in Christ who has shown us a different way. That future starts with us, now, because there is no going back, only moving forward. Taking our remembering and our honouring with us, and living in the light of it, not putting it to one side;

While we remember, in sorrow and grief, the countless lives lost in the violence of warfare we must never forget that war is a terrible and terrifying thing, that should never be resorted to except in the face of palpable evil.

We can, and should, be thankful not only for past sacrifices made for our freedoms but that young men and women are still enlisting in the armed forces, offering themselves to help put an end to the brutality that continues to flare up all around the world.

Through the freedoms that cost so much to protect we can be thankful that in our country, members of the Opposition are not carted off to jail. We live at peace, and tolerate an amazing diversity of strongly-held opinions.

Importantly we should remember ultimately it is the peacemaker who is blessed, and that love is always better than hate, forgiveness is always better than revenge. We pray for the day when the incessant carnage will finally come to an end, when war shall be no more, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So our remembering is not just for the past, then, but also for the future. In closing just one last lingering sound to remember from our Acts of Remembrance - the stark voice of the trumpet calling us to remember past and future. St Paul has something to say about trumpets. He says there will be a last trumpet. "The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.. ... Then what is written will be fulfilled: Death is swallowed up in victory."

Jesus says he will raise us up on the last day. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is telling us we will have our resurrection. That restoration is the victory we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. A new

Paradise, a new Eden, in a new heavens and earth with no sin or death or mourning or crying or pain. This is God's promise for all of us who trust in Christ. Just as Job is certain we, also, can be certain. Death is not the end of the story. The best is yet to come. Resurrection, restoration, life everlasting. We are joined to Christ, and we will be gathered with his people; with the fallen and with the saints and with the faithful departed. It is the victory that awaits us and it is our present hope.

### **For the Fallen**

BY LAURENCE BINYON

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;  
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not 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.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.