

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Helen Lunn. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome to the online service from Enfield Methodist Circuit for Remembrance Sunday.

Call to Worship

God is our refuge and strength;
a very present help in trouble.

Lord, we all have our memories of war,
personal or handed on.

We give thanks for all who gave their lives and suffered for our freedom,
and we pray for all who suffer the fear and misery of conflicts
across the world today.

Amen.

Hymn Eternal Father, strong to save (Singing the Faith 517)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4bo6eHesBk>

Eternal Father, strong to save,
whose arm doth bind the restless wave,

who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep:
*O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.*

O Saviour, whose almighty word
the winds and waves submissive heard,
who walked upon the foaming deep,
and calm amid its rage didst sleep:
*O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.*

O sacred Spirit, who didst brood
upon the chaos dark and rude,
who made its angry tumult cease,
and gavest light and life and peace:
*O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.*

O Trinity of love and power,
shield all who sail in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe,
protect them wheresoe'er they go:
*and ever let there rise to thee
glad hymns of praise from land and sea.*

William Whiting (1825–1878)

A time of prayer

Surrounded by memories, near and far,
we come before you, O Lord, our God.
In the middle of turmoil, you offer us peace.
In the middle of conflict, you offer us resolution.
We come before you now to worship.
We know that our future is in your hands,
and that your promises are true.

God of the prophets and priests,
God of the disciples and apostles,
God of witnesses through the generations,
you are a God of patience and perseverance,
a God of love and hope,
a God of healing and resolve,
a God we can trust and rely on,
a God who is all for all people,
a God who never lets us down.
God of all, we adore you,
you are our purpose and our motivation.

Creator of all that is good,
we bring our sorrows, our anguish and distress
for the ways we have failed to show your love,
be it by word, by deed, or by inaction.
So many have given so much of their lives for us

and yet we have failed not only them but you.
Lord God, forgive us we pray.

God is beyond our rivalries and disagreements,
beyond our cruelty and neglect
and God speaks his words to those who truly repent.
My child, I hear your pain, I feel your sorrow, I take your
burden;
go, go free from pain, unburdened by sorrow for all that is
past,
I forgive you, go in peace, go in love, go in joy.

In the middle of pain and sorrow,
in the middle of recollection and remembrance,
we praise you, O God.
You have been a rock for all who name you as their God;
you are our rock.
You have been a protective father, mother, parent,
enfolding your people in your care.
You have been, in Jesus, the one walking with us,
the one carrying us across the battlefields of life, living and
death.
Your Holy Spirit has moved among us,
giving us hope and light, guidance and inspiration.
To you, God of ages, we offer praise and thanksgiving.
Amen.

Bible Readings

Daniel 12:1-3

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Mark 13:1-8

As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

² "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

⁵ Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is

still to come. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

Reflection

The poppy serves to remind us that this week we celebrate an important day, we celebrate Remembrance Day.

Remembrance Day is a day on which we honour the men, and women who have served in the military and who have fought to defend our freedom.

The poppy was chosen as a symbol for Remembrance Day because it reminds us of a place called Flanders Fields which we heard about in the poem earlier. Flanders Fields is a place where many soldiers from the First World War are buried. The poppies grow wild there between all the crosses that mark their place.

Today we not only have red poppies but also purple, black and white poppies.

The purple poppies to remember the animals who have been victims of war. Animal like horses, dogs and pigeons were often drafted into the war effort, and those that wear the purple poppy feel their service should be seen as equal to that

of human service. In particular, many horses were killed or injured during World War One.

The black poppy is mostly associated with the commemoration of black, African and Caribbean communities' contribution to the war effort – as servicemen and service women, and as civilians.

The white poppy promotes peace. It commemorates people who died in conflict, but focuses on achieving peace and challenging the way we look at war.

Last week I was on holiday in County Durham and I saw a lovely war memorial at Stanhope in Bishop Auckland. As well as a blanket of red poppies surrounding the war memorial they also had a cross with purple and white poppies on it too.

We enjoy a lot of freedom. We are free to come to church and worship, we are free to choose what we want to be when we want to be when we grow up, we are free to choose where we want to live, we are free to choose most of the things that affect our daily lives.

This might come as a surprise to some of you – but did you know that freedom isn't free?

Someone had to pay the price for us to have the freedom that we enjoy. There may be men and women right here in this room this morning who have helped to pay the price. Some may have served in the military and some may have fought in wars or affected by the war.

There also may be some people here this morning who had loved ones who gave their lives fighting for our freedom. These are the ones that we honour as we celebrate Remembrance Day.

It is often stated that religion causes more wars than anything else. The truth is somewhat different.

Only 7% of wars have had an identifiable religious cause, and those wars account for 2% of all deaths in war. This compares starkly with secular causes of war such as territory, border, trade or political disputes.

We have a lot of freedom, but the greatest freedom that we have is the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that the penalty for sin is death, but you and I have been set free from this penalty.

We have been set free because Jesus paid the penalty. The Bible tells us that Jesus died to set us free from the penalty of

sin. Instead of death, we have been given eternal life. The freedom wasn't free, Jesus paid the price.

Jesus' message was often profoundly counter-cultural, and sat uncomfortably alongside the beliefs and practices of many in his day, as it still does today. When we follow Jesus, we take the same path. A path that leads us in the direction of peace and justice, and not towards unnecessary conflict.

Issues of security are high on many agendas: from national and international security down to household insurance policies and pension plans. But for many people insurance is an undreamed-of luxury. For some, war or natural disaster wreaks havoc on homes and entire communities. How would we feel to live life without such 'security'? In Jesus' time, the Temple must have seemed the most secure and solid of structures, the focus of the nation's hopes for the future. Yet it is the Temple that, Jesus says, will fall.

The Temple in Jerusalem represented the essence of what it meant to be Jewish at the time of Jesus. In three-dimensional form, it was the presence of God among the chosen people and its sheer size spoke of permanence. Under Roman oppression, it may have provided a feeling of security and hope for Jesus' generation. To the disciples who had come from the little towns and villages around Galilee, the sight of such huge

buildings would have been awe-inspiring. Jesus' remarks about the destruction of the Temple may have provoked a range of reactions from sheer incredulity to wonder at the ways of God. The Temple was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans.

Just as the Temple symbolised a system of belief and its social and political implications, we can look around the world today and reflect on what our buildings represent. The events of September 11th, 2001 focused on buildings of enormous symbolic significance. The Twin Towers could be understood to have represented the might of American capitalism, just as the Pentagon stood for US military dominance. Congress, which escaped destruction because the passengers of that hijacked aircraft brought it down, symbolised American political power.

Perhaps Jesus had worried his followers with talk of the destruction of the Temple, and this may have prompted the question about when it would happen. Jesus assures them, not by pretending that everything would be all right in the end, but by explaining that they are not to be alarmed by dramatic events taking place. He acknowledges that many will be led astray by false messiahs, and that hope is likely to be undermined by wars and calamities. **Is he suggesting that his followers should trust in him, the true Messiah, rather than in the physically impressive and apparently permanent Temple? Is he offering safety and security? How can we describe the assurance he offers?**

In what or whom do we actually put our trust? Are some of our largest buildings a reminder that contemporary society places its trust in material things, and looks for assurance from them?

Jesus notes that it will not only be wars, but rumours of wars that might cause alarm. Rumours can effectively undermine a person's standing in a community, because they spread mistrust and suspicion. To spread a rumour can be to inject uncertainty, anxiety and even fear into a situation, effectively excluding the victims from society. The best way to counter such rumours is to reassure people of the truth and the evidence for it, and to work hard to reintegrate the victims.

However, rumours are part of the driving force of the market economy. Prices in stock markets around the world rise or fall in response to rumour. Bear markets occur when people feel pessimistic, when negative rumours about particular companies can force the value of their shares down. By contrast, bull markets occur when prices are being forced upwards. In either case, there may be very little actual substance behind the rumours. The suppression of share prices that occurred early in 2003, when war with Iraq looked probable, is a reminder that stock markets operate primarily on speculation. The assurance that Christian faith offers points beyond rumour to well-being, despite the insecurities of the material world.

Where do we look for reassurance in times of trouble? Both Daniel and Mark, offer passages in which the faithful are being assured that they will be saved from the trouble ahead, no matter how bleak it looks. **How does this sit with our modern expectations? Does the idea of the 'snowflake generation' mean that we are no longer very resilient? How does this sit with the image of a 'persecuted people' as seen in this week's readings? How were those people, in their different contexts, encouraged to respond to adversity? How does that compare to modern Britain?**

Assurance can help the Christian endure the dramatic events that make contemporary life feel so insecure. Terry Waite, the Archbishop of Canterbury's personal representative working for the release of hostages in Beirut, was himself taken prisoner by an extremist group. Following his release in 1991, after five years mainly in solitary confinement, he spoke of his determination throughout the ordeal to have no regrets, no self-pity and no sentimentality. He derived strength from remembering significant people he had met, including Desmond Tutu, then struggling to overcome the evils of apartheid in South Africa. The impression Terry Waite gives is that the assurance and commitment that other people had shown under pressure gave him sufficient assurance to endure his captivity, and enough hope to believe it would eventually end.

There is a mythic quality to Mark's accurate description of the human condition and the way life is. In 2000 years of human history, nothing seems to have changed! The Jerusalem Temple is still the focus of conflict. Rather than deny it, Jesus encourages us to see life as it is, to realise that nothing, however solid it looks, is secure. Even faith is not secure. In this context we are challenged to face the void, to walk with the pain and the messiness of human life.

The apophatic strand of Christian spirituality (one that asserts we can only speak about God in terms of what God is *not*, because God is beyond our limited human understanding) embraces this void at the heart of life. Faith is forged in the context of pain, of exile, and in embracing the difficult questions that face us. This is not in the sense of withdrawing from the world but a call to deeper engagement with it.

Classics such as *The Dark Night of the Soul*, written whilst St John of the Cross was in prison, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written in the aftermath of the great plague of the fourteenth century, call us to face the silence of God and to journey deeper into life in the Spirit.

It is from this context of the 'dark night of the soul' that Jesus assures us that war and disaster are not the end but rather signal the beginning of an ongoing struggle against injustice. Like the refiner's fire forging faith, or the pains of labour

signalling the birthing of a new life, we are to engage with the current reality in order to catch the vision of the kingdom of God.

Remembrance Day is not just a time to fast and mourn. It is not just a time to remember those who died. Still less is it a time to say that war that is good or honourable.

Rather it is a time us - as we recall those who gave themselves for us,

- to remember just why it is they did what they did,
- a time to in fact remember the horror of war and vow to ourselves - never again,
- a time to take up the torch once more and to dedicate ourselves anew to living in such a way that we do not break faith with those who died to bring peace to the world,
- a time to commit ourselves once again to the struggle against evil
- the struggle against the very things to lead to war in the first place.
- a time to love our enemies and those who persecute us.

Today as we celebrate Remembrance Sunday., let us remember to stop and thank God for those who have paid the price for our freedom. Let us also remember to thank God for Jesus, who has set us free from the penalty for sin, because he was willing to pay the price.

Dear Father

Thank you for the freedom that we enjoy. We are thankful for those who paid the price for that freedom, but even more important, we thank you for the freedom we have because Jesus was willing to pay the penalty for our sin.

Amen

Hymn Beauty for Brokenness (Singing the Faith 693)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6n4mHcJTCV4>

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,

voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;

make us content with
the things that we need.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Graham Kendrick (*b. 1950*)

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A time of prayer

On this Remembrance Sunday,
we remember past wars:
those who fought in them;
those who lived through them;
those who died in them.

Silence

We pray for the victims of past wars,
remembering before you, loving God,
those who died in battle,
or from the consequences of injury or disease,
and those who mourned or still mourn them.
We remember those permanently maimed or disabled,
and those psychologically scarred or disturbed.
We pray for an end to the suffering of war.

Silence

We pray for the victims of current conflicts,
remembering before you, loving God,

children trained to hate and fight,
families turned into homeless refugees,
and lands laid waste and made barren.
We remember those blinded or crippled
and those driven insane by nightmare experiences.
We pray for an end to the destructive hatred of war.

Silence

We pray for the peace of the world
remembering before you, loving God,
areas where there is armed conflict ...
and all those who are working for peace.
We remember that you have called us to strive together for
the coming of your kingdom of love and peace.
We pray that you will equip us for the task
with the faith that knows
that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.
In the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn To God be the glory (Singing the Faith 94)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SusuTxyFW-A>

To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory - great things he has done!*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!

And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the earth hear his voice!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the people rejoice!

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory - great things he has done!*

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the earth hear his voice!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the people rejoice!

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory - great things he has done!*

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

Blessing

Father in heaven,
we dedicate ourselves
to serve you and all peoples,
in the ways of peace,
to work for the relief of want and suffering
and for the glory of your name.

May your Holy Spirit guide us;
grant us wisdom and courage;
give us hope and keep us faithful in your ways
through all our days.

Amen.

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