



St James Ayr

Sunday 10 November - Remembrance Sunday



WELCOME, INTIMATIONS

Colours /music

Invite congregation to stand for the colours

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus said: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16, 33)

Hymn: 336: Christ is our light vv 1-2 (tune: Highland Cathedral)

Act of Remembrance

Prayer

O God of truth and justice,

we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Call to Remembrance

Remember the widows of sixty years and more, the men and women living now who never knew their fathers. Remember the love that was lost, the wisdom wasted, the minds that were twisted and the limbs distorted. Remember those who ask us to remember them; remember the one, who asked us to remember him

The Tryst

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.

congregation: we will remember them

The Last Post

The Silence

Reveille

Dedication of Wreath and Wreath Laying

Loving God,

We bring to you a wreath of Poppies, blood red and black, a symbol of lives lost on battlefields, of bodies maimed and disfigured, of families shattered, but a sign too, of new life in war ravaged soil, a symbol of peace, of hope, of working together across barriers for justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. May these wreaths (this wreath) be a symbol for our dedication to a world as you have intended it, a world of peace. AMEN

Hymn: 562: Through the Love of God our Saviour

CHILDRENS' TALK

Hymn: 250: Sent by the Lord am I

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Voice 1

God of justice and peace,

Today we cry out to you as we remember the dead and wounded of wars and conflict past and present, we call to you as we remember the pain and the anguish of battlefields and bombed out cities, and we bring our hope to you, that the past will be our warning, that we learn to live in peace and see **Your kingdom come**.

Voice 2

Gracious God,

We approach you with thanksgiving for the words of the prophets, words of courage and hope, words that show us a future in which swords are made into ploughshares, warriors' boots will be burnt and you yourself will comfort your people, who pray **that your kingdom may come**

We thank you for your son Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who gave his life as a ransom for many and called to us to bring justice and righteousness to your people, we give thanks for your Holy Spirit, which lives in our hearts, so we can follow your son's example, so we may build a world, where all can live in peace, a world, in which **your kingdom comes**

Voice 1

Forgiving Father,

Our world is broken and torn, full of pain and anguish, full of hatred and war. The world of peace, which we long for seems far out of reach. We feel helpless and forsaken and at times we doubt you. Forgive us

where we cannot see your light in our darkness and lose hope that **your kingdom will come.**

You have called us to build your kingdom, to bring love where there is hatred, comfort where there is injury, forgiveness where there is hurt. You have called us to be your son's hands and feet, but there are times when this task is too much for us. Forgive us when we fail to make **your kingdom come.**

Voice 2:

Father,

We know that we live in a broken and sinful world, that we have failed you and each other, but we also know that you have sent your son into this world, so we are saved and in this trust we pray together as your son has taught us to pray

Our father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name, thy kingdom come

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

and lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil

for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. AMEN

Hymn: 577: Christ be beside me

READINGS: Micah 4, 1-5; Matthew 25, 31-45

Micah 4, 1-5

In the last days

the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and peoples will stream to it.

2 Many nations will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

3 He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

4 Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

5 All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord
our God for ever and ever.

Matthew 25, 31-45

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, ³² and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to the people on his right, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. ³⁵ I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, ³⁶ naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷ The righteous will then answer him, ‘When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? ³⁸ When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ The King will reply, ‘I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Away from me, you that are under God's curse! Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels! ⁴² I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they will answer him, ‘When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we would not help you?’ ⁴⁵ The King will reply, ‘I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.’

Hymn: 543 Longing for Light we wait in darkness (Christ be our Light)

SERMON

Let us Pray for the Holy Spirit

Loving God,

As we remember today the pain and the suffering of conflicts past and present, we have also come to pray for a better world, a world of peace and justice, a world as you have intended it. And so we ask for your Holy Spirit in this hour, so we know and do your will here on earth.

In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN

Friends,

I don't know if you know this about me, but I am a proper Strictly fan, I love the costumes, the music, the dancing – and if you wonder what that has got to do with Remembrance Day, please bear with me, I am coming to that. For me Strictly is a welcome distraction on a Saturday evening, a break from the real world, a world of storytelling, make believe and dreams. I can understand it though, if you do not share this enthusiasm, if the glitter and the glamour are not your thing, if you feel that the show is a bit ostentatious or if you are put off by the recent scandals. Because once every year I am tempted myself to turn off the telly, and that is on Remembrance Day, when the dancers try to reenact war time stories. Two years ago, the ladies were all dressed in poppy red dresses, last year – if I remember rightly- the professional dancers created a scene, in which young men go to war and leave their dance partners heartbroken. Neither story tells the full truth about war- and maybe that is not the intention. These dances tell a story about romantic heroism that has little to do with the horrors of the battlefield and trenches. Now. I do not want to spoil the fun of the

programme for anyone, and by all means tune in to the result show tonight – I would want to know myself who is leaving this week. But when you watch it tonight, when you see a Remembrance story play out, I encourage you to ask yourself: is it real, is it true? “Lest we forget” is the motto of this day, and to not forget, to remember, means to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, because if on Remembrance Day we forget or leave out the pain and the anguish of the battlefield and trenches, if we forget the tears of the widows and the orphans, if we forget the young men and women broken by shell shock or PTSD then we have already forgotten those we are encouraged to remember today. I have friends from Ukraine. Before they moved to Spain last month, they lived in Prestwick, they had to leave their home city Kharkiv for the sake of their children and elderly parents and boy, how do they miss home. One of the ladies told me, how a hospital was hit by a drone, not five minutes from where she used to live, their young adult daughter went back to their home city for a few days and found her flat in ruins, their friends do not have enough bandages or equipment to tend to their wounded soldiers or civilians – these are the true stories of war today.

It seems that the stories of war we tell today here in Scotland, where the reality is distant in either time or space, are either those of glorified, romantic heroism, or the dark and grim accounts of the horrors of the trenches and bombed out cities, past and present. Yet the prophet in Our Old Testament Reading today shows us that there is a different, a third way to tell a war time story. His story is a vision of a better future, of a world as it could be. A world in which swords are made into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, a world in which “nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore”, a world in which “everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid”. That is different from romanticising or glamourising war. It has to be, because Micah knew a thing or two about battle. He lived through the

fall of Israel and the invasion of his home Juda, through the vastly superior military superpower Assur. Much smaller, much less well equipped, internally plagued by corruption and injustice, neither Israel in the North, nor Juda in the South stood a chance, although to be fair, the Southern kingdom at least tried to make a stand. The point is, the prophet Micah, when he wrote down his vision about the future knew about the reality of war from his own experience. It is true, that soldiers at this time fought with swords and spears rather than with guns, bombs and drones, but what the prophet had seen and lived through still wasn't pretty. And yet he draws the picture of a brighter future, a future that at first sight has nothing to do with the reality of battlefields and a besieged city, a future in which all nations will worship God together and in peace, a world, in which the Lord himself "will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide", a world in which no-one will train for war anymore. Micah knew that this story did not reflect the brutal reality of the war he lived through, but he told it anyway. He told it as a story of hope and encouragement, he told it as a story of trust in God.

I think, we could do with such dreamers and visionaries today. And we do have them. There are songs about steel helmets turned into kitchen colanders (which actually did happen) and missiles turning into fairground carousels for children. There are dreams that all people live in peace and the world is as one. There are visions of wars, where nobody comes, and the power of love overcoming the love of power. Nobody suggests that those dreams and visions reflect the reality of our world, nobody denies the bloodshed and the horrors of the battlefields past and present, but those dreams and visions are still important, because they point to the future, because they show us a world as it could be, they have the potential to become reality and in that way they are true. And the ancient prophets have taught us how to dream this dream.

Jesus, too has a dream, a vision in today's New Testament reading: The dream of God's kingdom. One could argue that Jesus' whole ministry on earth was a vision of God's kingdom, a vision of justice and peace, a vision that through Jesus became a reality, fleeting and incomplete, to be sure, but visible all the same. Today, however, Jesus speaks of the future, a future in which he "comes as King ... and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him". It is not as pleasant a vision as that of the prophet Micah, it is a vision of judgement of all nations and all people. And the nations and people will not be judged by how well their economy did or how much wealth they have accumulated for themselves, but by how they have supported the weak and the vulnerable, they will not be judged by the power and influence they have had in this world, they will be judged by whom they have served, they will not be judged by their learning or their education system, they will be judged by how they use their knowledge and understanding for peace and justice in the world. Because Jesus said: "³⁵I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, ³⁶naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me". The kingdom of God belongs to those, not to the rich, not to the powerful, not to the heroes or the victors.

And on Remembrance Day we are reminded of this - because Jesus' vision of God's kingdom, a kingdom of peace and justice, Jesus vision of the future informs our present, informs our decisions today. On Remembrance Day this is our choice: Do we want to be like the sheep-like people of our Bible text who feed the hungry, take care of the sick and welcome the stranger and in doing so feed, take care of and welcome Jesus, or do we want to be like the goatlike people, who ignore the hungry, pass by the sick and deter and expel the stranger, and in doing so ignore, pass by and deter Jesus? Do we want to inherit the kingdom of God, the kingdom of justice and peace or do we want

to live in a world of darkness, bitterness and enmity? Do we want to dream up a vision of peace and justice like the ancient prophets did and work to make these dreams come true or are we content in the world we live in, a world of hatred and bloodshed? This is our choice for the future- today, as we remember the dead of the past. AMEN

Hymn: 710: I have a dream (tune: dear Lord and Father of mankind)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Voice 1:

Loving God,

You are a God of love and care. You hold us in your hand and keep us from harm as we go through life. You are with us in good times and in difficult times and will never let us down. For this we thank you. As we remember the past today, we pray for the people of the present and we bring before you all who are suffering and all who are in pain today.

Voice 2:

As we remember the dead of the past, we pray for all who live through war and conflict today in Ukraine, in Israel, in Gaza and in Lebanon. We pray for men, women and children, injured and traumatised, mourning for family and friends. We pray for all who are forced to flee their homes and for all who stay behind. May they know your presence, we pray.

Voice 3:

As we remember the injustices of days gone by, we pray for all who are persecuted and deprived of their freedom today. We pray for all

who do not have a voice, who face imprisonment, torture and death when they stand up for their own freedom and for the freedom of others in Russia, in Iran, in North Korea. May they know that you hear their cries.

Voice 4:

As we remember the past, we pray for the future, for the young people who will shape it. We pray for those who are full of hope and enthusiasm, who see a clear path before them and for those who are worried about what the future holds for them. May they all be able to hold on to their dreams and visions and may their hopes be fulfilled.

Voice 5:

As we remember days of struggle and sorrow, we pray for everyone in our congregation and community who struggle today. We pray for those who are ill in body and soul, for those who grieve for someone close to them, for all whose memories and life stories are full of heartache and pain. May they know that you are with them.

For all this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

We prepare for the dedication of the offering

DEDICATION

Loving God,

You have given us your commandments of love for you and for each other, you have given us hope for justice and peace through your prophets, you have given us your son to redeem us from our sins and failures, so your kingdom of love may come on earth as it is in heaven.

For all this we offer our thanks and in gratitude for all you have given to us we now offer up some of our treasure, and we ask that you may add your blessings, so you it will be used to further your kingdom.

For this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

Hymn: 737: Will your anchor hold

Colours

BENEDICTION &AMEN

And the God of justice and peace guard you and guide you in this coming week. And the almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore.

National Anthem

God save the King

Colours leave church