

November 6, 2022
Twenty-second after Pentecost / Proper 27
Remembrance Sunday

Meditation: "Remember the Future"

It's always interesting to go back and re-read old sermons from years ago to see what I was thinking back then, and see how much or if my thinking has changed over the years.

It was over twenty years ago now. I was on my student internship at Olivet United Church in Kitchener and Grace United Church in Roseville. My supervisor said he would be out of the country on a scuba diving vacation for the Sunday nearest Remembrance Day, and I would be solely responsible for the service. I asked around. There were members of the congregation who had lost relatives on both sides, German and Canadian, in the world wars. It made me stop to think about what Remembrance Day is really all about.

There were things that were happening in society twenty years ago, and some of those things are still with us, and still have the same effect on people. But as I look around at our society now, in 2022, there are other things that I see. Things that disturb me greatly.

People who stand on the grave of the unknown soldier and urinate on it.

People who are intolerant of the rights of other people, and so they park trucks in residential areas and run their diesel engines and blow their air horns day and night.

People who verbally and physically attack others because of the way they dress, or the way they look, or their religious beliefs, or because they are, or aren't wearing a mask in public.

People seem to have lost tolerance for difference, and lost respect for others, perhaps even for themselves. I think it comes from some sense of entitlement. But they seem to forget that we live in a society that includes others, and that we depend on one another for many things.

If we are going to live in a functioning society, there have to be rules to govern our behaviour, or else we wind up with chaos and suffering. I

heard someone the other day say that we are living in a post-truth era. I think we are living in a post-respect era.

This Friday we mark Remembrance Day. A day we now remember those who died violent deaths in a time of war. I fear that the way we have construed Remembrance Day of late glorifies the dead, glorifies violent death, reminds us, even propels us to use violence to resolve the differences between people and groups of people. This is not as it ought to be!

Those who started Remembrance Day hoped it would become a day not for glorifying the dead and violent death, but to remember the senselessness of their deaths,

to remember the horror of war,

to remember the social costs of violence,

to think about the potential that was lost with each life that was lost,

to realize that violence is a really terrible way to resolve differences between peoples.

Those who started Remembrance Day hoped that it would act as brake on the rush to violence and warfare.

They hoped for a future much like the one that Micah spoke of.

A future that God dreams of, even yearns for.

A future where God will judge between nations;

a future where they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks;

a future where nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;

a future where they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees and no one shall make them afraid anymore.

I wondered, what is the role of Christianity in this. We who have a cross, a symbol of violence and death as our primary symbol. What if we had a bowl and towel, like the one Jesus used to wash the disciples' feet on his last night, symbols of service as our primary symbol. Would that make a difference in our thinking? Would that make a difference in our world?

It is important to remember the lives of all who have died in armed conflict.

It is important to remember the horrors and insanity of war as a means of resolving disputes between peoples, so that we stop killing one another.

Most of all, it is important to remember God's promised future where there will be peace and prosperity for all, where nations will not learn war anymore, and all shall sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees.

Of all the remembering that we do on this day, it is that future of peace borne out of justice and equity for all that we most need to remember. May it be so. Amen.