

## Litany of Remembrance and Reality

November 10<sup>th</sup> 2024

*(Ross, Ian, Emily and Carol)*

It's fair to say that most of us want peace. We believe in our hearts that peace is possible. This is what faith is.

Tomorrow we will remember those who have died – who literally died – for us. For our freedom, our democracy, our very lives.

Tomorrow we will be reminded that peace is often paved through the valley of death.

Let's also remember that peace is paved by those who survived, who work hard at home, who support, who educate, who advocate; those who keep the home fires burning and a cup of tea ready.

So today we remember – we remember the very human part of the ceremonies, the flags, the speeches, the bagpipes and the prayers.

We remember:

*(4 candles lit – one by each person)*

- The tear-stained faces of a family when a uniformed officer drives to their home with news.
- The empty chair at the dinner table
- The baby born while one parent is overseas
- The cadet scared to start field training
- The veteran with permanent yet invisible scars in mind, heart and soul
- The panic
- Fear
- Frustration
- Isolation
- Depression
- Shame
- Guilt
- Despair

We remember:

*(4 candles lit – one by each person)*

- The women who sewed the parachutes
- The chaplain praying before a battle
- The socks and mittens knit for those overseas
- The marriage proposals the night before deployment
- The rear party support
- The care packages
- The music amidst the ruins
- The laughter amidst the anxiety
- The friendships and bonds that will never be broken.

We remember:

*(4 candles lit – one by each person)*

- Peace-keepers and Peace-makers
- Pacifists and Reconcilers
- All who choose a path of service and sacrifice – firefighters, RCMP, Guards, EMTs, Police
- Supporters, helpers and champions

We remember:

*(4 candles lit – one by each person)*

- That love still exists
- That enemies can become friends
- That Hope isn't a lost cause
- And that Peace is possible.

Amen.

Reflectionnette November 10<sup>th</sup> 2024

Hebrews 9: 24-28

Julie Lees

This Hebrews passage was listed as one of the options for this Sunday and when I gave it a cursory glance a few weeks ago I saw the word “sacrifice” and thought ‘oh great, this passage will fit nicely for Remembrance Sunday.’ But then when I read it in more depth last week I wondered “what have I done? How is this going to have anything to say about remembering and conflict and soldiers and the great war?”

And, as usual with scripture, it ends up offering something new to ponder.

Some folks call the Letter to the Hebrews overwhelming because it is so dense, so rich in imagery, so demanding.

The way the author of this letter has written it, they are asking us for our complete faith and attention. Following Jesus is a matter of life and death. We must not turn away.

The letter elevates Jesus to the highest stature and speaks in a way that can make us uncomfortable ... animal sacrifice for the sins of the people; Jesus dying to bear our sins; Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice.

This may not be you, but I feel like some of us get so hung up on the idea that Jesus died for us that we ignore the passages that talk about it. And when we do that, we miss some of the rich love and devotion hiding in the text.

In the litany we heard read “tomorrow we will remember those who have died – who literally died – for us. For our freedom, our democracy, our very lives.”

Somehow we can receive this. We can accept and believe that soldiers in the first and second world wars died for the ‘free life’ we get to experience today. But, when we read about Jesus dying for us we have a harder time accepting that or seeing it as okay. I wonder why?

Is it because Jesus is more than human?

Is it because we can't believe that one person would understand what giving his life would mean?

Or that we can't grasp Jesus was God in human form?

Is it because he died on a cross?

Do we not feel worthy?

Or is it because it happened so long ago?

I don't have the answer – I just find this is a very worthy question. Tomorrow we remember people who died for us; and yet we bristle when we hear that Jesus died for us.

As Fiona shared with us, the author of the letter to the Hebrews is really trying to inspire these Jewish Christians to stay the course, to keep following Jesus even in the midst of all the persecution, imprisonment and doubt.

The whole letter is high stakes and strong imagery with warnings and rhetoric. Find your faith, stick to it, live it. If Jesus could endure all he did then surely we can endure whatever we are going through, the author tries to convince us.

The writer separates out the "true" heaven and the "copy" that we live in now. The writer also talks about Christ entering heaven, Christ offering himself, Christ appearing once for all.

I have no idea if it's deliberate or a coincidence of translation, but when the author uses "Christ" instead of "Jesus" it acts like a flashing light for me. Note this. Pay attention. Remember that Jesus is more than human. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is God made flesh.

Flashing light; take note: we are talking about the MORE than this. We are talking about what we can see and can't see, what we can know and can't know.

God in Jesus lived as human; God in Jesus faced peril; God in Jesus was tempted, persecuted, tried.

What this means is that God has an intimate knowledge of our suffering, our temptation, our hardship; and our sacrifice. God knows what it's like to walk a mile in our shoes.

This gives us courage for the fight – whatever that fight may be – greed, power, hatred, jealousy, insecurity, disillusionment – you name it.

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we are never alone. We believe in and follow a God who took human form, endured opposition and knows how we feel – all the time. A God who is beside each one of us in the experiences of everyday life and who is not going anywhere.

The author desperately wants us to hear this and speaks plainly about how Jesus sacrificed himself ... for the many who would come after him.

That includes you and me.

All the sacrifices we will bring to mind today and tomorrow come at a costly price. And all were, and are, made in the hopes that those who follow will live free, safely, joyfully, with justice, and in peace.

So, it behooves us to endure, to continue the fight ... and for followers of Jesus that fight is to make sure Christ's light shines into the shadows, that love is at the centre of all we say and do, that food on the table and a roof over every head is justice, and that peace is possible.

We are not alone in this work – God is with us and has been with us in every step.

We are not alone in this work – we stand on the shoulders of many who have given their lives for us to have this opportunity.

We are not alone.

Amen.