

This morning we are looking toward Nov. 11 at 11 am, when we as Canadians are asked to remember our veterans. Remember .... One of the things I remember is that WW1 was to be the war to end all wars and then there was WW2 and then there was Korea .... And now there are many, many smaller but significant conflicts all around the world. I wonder how we can make our remembering count, how can we honour the memory of those who fought and who are fighting for peace, those left behind, those who died, those whose bodies and souls are wounded by war, those who on this very day are in danger and those who are living in dread of a phone call.

I wonder what remembering has to do with being a Christian. What are we, as Christians, called to? How can we live out our faith, being the hands and feet of Christ? Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." What does being a peace maker look like?

With that as our context, let's look at the scripture readings for today.

In Deuteronomy, we hear the question: *What does God require of you Israel?* Deuteronomy is the 5<sup>th</sup> book of the Torah, the books of the law for the Hebrew people. In it are found teachings of how God calls the people of Israel to live. These teachings are what Jesus would have been taught as a Jewish child.

In this particular teaching, Israel is asked to remember that *you were strangers in the land of Egypt*. In fact, the Hebrew people not only were strangers in Egypt, they were slaves. This is a reminder of the great story of Moses, working as the hands of God, leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt, parting the Red Sea to escape from the pursuing Egyptian army. In this teaching, the Israelites are called to remember their past and to live their lives from that remembering. Remember that your ancestors were slaves in Egypt, remember that no one wants to be a slave, remember that God was with you in Egypt and is with you now and act accordingly.

The way of God is the way of justice, compassion and love. Remember and act accordingly. Listen to all the action verbs in the story... walk, love, serve. This is not a sentimental remembering. This is not a mushy, teary kind of remembering where we sit around, have a little cry and then go on as if nothing has happened. This is a call to active remembering. Remember and act out of that remembering. Remember and walk in God's way.

From the beginning of the Bible to the end, we find, over and over and over, this call to active remembering. Remember we are God's children and remember that God calls us to active loving in our world. The call heard in scripture is to live justly, to serve each other humbly in love because we are first loved by God. Today, we are the Christian church. We are rooted in this great tradition of justice and love. We are called to be peacemakers, children of God.

What does that look like? What does it mean to be a peacemaker? What does it mean to be a follower of the Way, a disciple of Jesus? It doesn't have to mean we join the armed forces as peacemakers. It doesn't mean we go into the midst of war zones to stand in solidarity with those at risk although we are very thankful for all those who do serve in that way. Their courage and sacrifice must be honoured and remembered but it is not the only way to serve. Each of us is called to serve as a peace maker in our own way. Each of us must be an active rememberer.

We must tell the story of our past in ways that not only remembers the suffering and sacrifice of our heroes but why that sacrifice was needed. There is a famous quote written by George Santayana in 1905 - "*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*" That is exactly what the passage we heard from Deuteronomy is saying: Remember the past and learn from it. Remember what it felt like to be a slave and make sure that your actions now defend others from having to live as a slave.

Yesterday evening I listened to Kamala Harris when she spoke. As the first woman to be vice president of the United States and as a person of colour, she began her address like this:

*So, Congressman John Lewis, before his passing, wrote: "Democracy is not a state. It is an act." And what he meant was that America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it, to guard it and never take it for granted. And protecting our democracy takes struggle. It takes sacrifice. But there is joy in it and there is progress. Because we the people have the power to build a better future.*

She reminded Americans of the great activist and leader, John Lewis, and his leadership in the fight for justice for Black Americans. From that memory, she reminded them that the work of justice is ongoing .... *For four years, you marched and organized for equality and justice, for our lives and for our planet. And then, you voted.*

This is what active remembering looks like. Remember the past and work toward a better future.

Remembrance Day is our opportunity, every year, to take time to remember our past – not just the heroic acts, but much more importantly, why those heroic sacrifices were needed. We must be aware of the frightening possibilities when we allow untrue narratives to be told unchallenged. When Hitler was rising to power in Nazi Germany, it wasn't in a vacuum. It was against a backdrop of inequity and corruption – poverty and lack of opportunity for the many and luxury and privilege for the few. That backdrop made fertile ground for his dangerous ideology to grow. It made the opening for the horrors of genocide that followed. When we forget our history, when we forget to tell our children the whys, when we let our history be retold in ways that deny the horrors of our past, we are failing to honour the sacrifices that gave us our freedom and democracy in the first place.

When we look at our world today, what do we see? What stories need to be told to ensure that our country and our democracy will continue to be strong, defending the rights of all? When we tell the stories of our family members who fought for us, remember to tell also the why. Take time to learn the why if you don't know it. Our children and grand children and great grandchildren need to know.

And when you see wedges being pushed between us by our political leadership, stand up and say a strong and firm no. When you hear the truth being twisted to fit their agendas being told stand up and call them out. Remember the consequences of not defending our democracy and our charter of rights and do the work needed to preserve our ideals. Be an active rememberer!

Active remembering means that each one of us finds ways to stand up for peace, to stand up for justice, to stand up and love our neighbour. Tell our children the way of peace by being mentors and examples. Remember the past and actively work to prevent it from happening again. We need to change the world, one small action at a time. We can start being peacemakers right here at home. Joe Biden said last night, speaking as the president elect of the United States:

*We must make the promise of the country real for everybody — no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity or their disability.*

As much as that is true there, it is true here in Canada. We must be vigilant for narratives that threaten all that we hold dear. We must do the work of justice, the work of compassionate love, the work of serving our neighbor.

We are called to walk the talk. In the words of Re. Dr. Rod Sykes, a retired United Church minister living in Calgary:

*The measure of a people's heart is this:*

*Do we remember the sacrifices of the past; Do we work for peace in the present; Do we speak of hope for the future? And so we come now before God to name as our dream God's reign of shalom, to commit ourselves to the cause of peace,*

*And to remember.*

The way of God is the way of justice, compassion and love. Remember and commit yourself to the cause of peace. Be God's hands and feet in our world. Be an active rememberer.