**Remembrance Sunday @ Home November 14th 2021**



**Opening prayer**   
Holy God, Holy and Strong One, Holy and Mighty One,   
We rejoice in your presence, we live by your power.   
Keep us in your peace; through Christ, the living Lord. **Amen.**

**Confession**

God shows his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.   
Let us then show our love for him by confessing our sins in penitence and faith. cf Romans5:8   
**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.   
We have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.   
In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are   
and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you;   
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**

**Bible Readings** Psalm 16 Mark 13: 1 – 8

**Reflection from Ian Urquhart**

That is quite a dramatic reading we have just heard from Mark’s Gospel! Jesus has been teaching in the Temple in Jerusalem. That was a truly magnificent building, in first century Jerusalem the Temple absolutely filled the Northwest corner of the city. It was being rebuilt by King Herod the Great as an awe-inspiring structure towering over the city, a vision of cream stone and gold. It’s hardly surprising that, as we heard at the start of the reading, Jesus’ followers exclaim “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

And so you can imagine how astonished they would have been when Jesus replies “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” Not surprisingly they quiz him, when is this going to happen? How will we know when to expect it? Jesus warns them of coming wars and rumours of war, nation will rise up against nation, there will be persecution and famine and death. And, sure enough, less than 50 years later all that came about: in the year 70AD the Roman legions under Titus crushed a Jewish rebellion and sacked Jerusalem, they flattened the city, they razed the Temple to the ground. All that is left of that magnificent structure today is the Western Wall, the Wailing Wall as it’s known, where Jewish people still gather every day to pray, to lament the destruction of the Temple nearly 2000 years ago. And if you visit Rome, you can find the Arch of Titus, just up the road from the Colosseum - a great big arch celebrating his triumph, adorned with sculptures showing the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, carrying off the booty - including the menorah, the sacred 7-branched candlestick, the height of a man. The treasures from the Temple could well have helped pay for building the Colosseum.

Just to bring the story closer to home - imagine that you are listening to Jesus speaking on the West steps of Liverpool Cathedral, which is one of the biggest cathedrals in the world. He’s looking up at that great tower 100 metres above his head, his back to the Liverpool waterfront and Albert Dock, and the view across the Mersey to the Wirral. And as you stand in admiration, Jesus says to you,

“Just think, this is going to be completely destroyed, flattened, not one stone will be left standing on another.”

I’d be pretty shaken up. I’ve a great affection for Liverpool Cathedral, it’s a must-see if we’ve visitors who don’t know Merseyside, we’ve taken our granddaughters there, they loved it. I’ve heard Ian Tracey play its fantastic organ, Widor’s Toccata at full throttle. I’ve seen Murder in the Cathedral performed there, complete with knights in armour on real horses clip-clopping up the aisle. I’ve been there when the Queen visited - not, I hasten to add, in any church capacity; and also when Margaret Thatcher was there, though maybe we should draw a veil over that. As with any cathedral there are tombs in and around the building - and one of them is that of Bishop Francis Chavasse, second Bishop of Liverpool at the beginning of the last century. He was very much a driving force to get the cathedral project started, the site selected, Giles Gilbert Scott chosen as architect, starting the massive task of fund-raising.

But if I was in search of inspiration and example, I wouldn’t go to the Bishop’s grave, worthy man though he undoubtedly was. I’d go to the grave of his son, Noel. I’d have to go a bit further afield, I’d have to take the Eurostar to Belgium; and then take myself on the road from Poperinge to Ypres. Now there’s a name from the First Great War of the last century, a city fought over time and time again between the Allied forces and the Germans, the location for the Menin Gate. I’ve joined the hundreds of people who still go every evening at 8.00 to hear the Last Post played. About half way along the Ypres road, I’d find a little village called Brandhoek; and I’d look for the cemetery there. It’s quite small, only 558 graves- Tyne Cot, the biggest British war cemetery, has nearly 12000 soldiers remembered there; the nearby German cemetery of Langemark has one mass grave containing the remains of over 25000 German soldiers.

Even when I’d found Brandhoek, it would help to know whereabouts in the cemetery I should be looking - all the graves, like all British war graves, are the same, the simple white Portland headstone, all identical. And when I’d found it, the inscription is very simple “Captain N G Chavasse”- and then what makes this grave so inspirational, “VC and Bar; MC.”

VC. That’s the Victoria Cross, Britain’s highest military award for gallantry, for bravery, for courage under fire in enemy action. Since it was established over 150 years ago, in 1856, only 1355 men - sadly, so far only men - have been awarded the VC - for instance, Guy Gibson, who led 617 Squadron on the famous Dambusters’ raid, flying his Lancaster bomber at tree top height, level and straight, heading for the precise aiming point to release his bomb, a sitting target for enemy anti-aircraft fire. Very often the VC is awarded posthumously, the hero receiving it died in the action that won him the award - like Colonel H Jones, who died leading the attack with his men from the Parachute Regiment at the Battle of Goose Green, during the Falklands War.

But it’s those words “and bar” that mark out Noel Chavasse as something very special indeed: he is one of only three men to have been awarded the Victoria Cross not once, but twice. Beneath that inscription are engraved two representations of the Victoria Cross. And - get this - Noel was not a fighting soldier, going out on the attack. On the top of his gravestone is the crest of the Royal Army Medical Corps: he was a doctor, tending the wounded, going out into no-man’s land under enemy fire to bring them back to the British lines. He won his first VC in August 1916, for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty, despite himself being wounded in the action. The final line of the citation for the medal reads “Altogether he saved the lives of some twenty badly wounded men, besides the ordinary cases which passed through his hands. His courage and self-sacrifice were beyond praise.”

The second VC was won a year later, under similarly horrific battle conditions, where again he showed most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty when in action. There, the citation ends “By his extraordinary energy and inspiring example, he was instrumental in rescuing many wounded who would have otherwise undoubtedly succumbed under the bad weather conditions. This devoted and gallant officer subsequently died of his wounds.”

At the bottom of Noel’s gravestone, there is a quotation from the Bible, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” That’s from John’s Gospel, words spoken by Jesus himself. He is looking ahead to his own death just a few days later- betrayed by a friend; arrested and subject to sham trials; stripped and flogged, no, scourged when they use a multi-thonged whip threaded with metal, to take the skin off down to the flesh and bone. A crown of thorns placed on his head, not just briars but two inch acacia spikes, forced down onto his head. Then taken outside the city walls to be crucified, nailed hand and foot and hung naked on a cross to die, the cruellest death the Romans could figure out, fit only for slaves and the worst criminals.

Jesus went to that death willingly, laying down his life - not just for his friends, but for you and me. Just as Noel Chavasse did for the wounded men under his care; just as the men whose names we will shortly hear read out did, so that we might live in peace and freedom. Just as those who serve in our armed forces are ready to do today - as is often said in services like this, “When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.”

By his death Jesus won for us not just tomorrow, but all our tomorrows, all the time there will ever be, in this life and the next. By his death, by laying down his life for us, he won us forgiveness of all we might do wrong; by his death he won for us the crown of eternal life. Let us resolve to give him thanks and praise for his sacrifice by committing ourselves to follow him in all we say and do, now and forever - loving God, and loving our neighbour as ourselves, laying down our lives for our friends.

**Prayers of intercession**

We pray for our armed forces. We thank you for their service. We ask you to keep them safe as they serve across the world.

We remember those who have died serving their country in war time and peace time. Comfort their relatives and help us to remember them.

We pray for those countries where there is war and unrest. We ask for peace and understanding.

We ask for understanding between countries. We pray for diplomats and politicians, that they might help avoid conflict and calm those calling for war.

We thank you for all doctors and nurses serving in conflicts and emergencies across the world.

Keep them safe.

We remember those in this community who died in military service in the World Wars. Help us to remember their sacrifice.

**Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

Let us remember in the presence of God those who have died amid the tragedy of war – those whom we knew and whose memory we treasure, those mourned by other loved ones. Let us celebrate all who have lived and died in the service of their fellow men and women.

**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.**

God of all peoples, we remember with sadness that so many have died because of wars and violence.   
God of all nations, we remember with hope the death and resurrection of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, who   
died to bring eternal peace.   
God of all peoples, we pray for ourselves and for others that your peace may increase in our hearts and   
lives as we live in your world. Send us your Holy Spirit to help us work out your peace in daily living until   
Christ comes again to reconcile all to himself. **Amen.**

**Closing prayer:**   
The Lord look upon you and refresh you,   
The Lord in his mercy, restore you,   
The Lord in his love, strengthen you;   
and the blessing of God Almighty,   
Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ.** **Amen.**