



Sunday, 11 November 2018 – Remembrance Sunday
The Centenary of the end of World War 1
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: Epistle Romans 8:31-end, Gospel St Matthew 5:1-12
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Today, as we commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1 and other conflicts, it's important to ask ourselves yet again 'What are we remembering?' Some of you or members of your family have served in the armed forces and merchant navy but most of us would not be qualified to comment on battle strategies, so it's not strategies we remember today. Rather, we are paying tribute to the millions of ordinary foot soldiers, able seamen and air force crews who simply got on with the task. It was their combined brave, costly sacrifice together with our St Andrew's men that won the wars.

We may know our own family's service record but most service personnel who pay the ultimate sacrifice, seldom get a mention in despatches or have their sacrifices recorded in media headlines. The only public acknowledgement that most receive is an inscription on a memorial stone, similar to that placed on the wall of this church. Their names are read out at this time each year, and then ... life goes on as usual. Is that the purpose of this service? To an extent, yes. Because those men and women gave their tomorrows for our today, we can live in freedom and, therefore, they deserve to be remembered with gratitude, from generation to generation.

There is, however, more that we can learn from their sacrifice and example. That they acted on the orders of their leaders is commendable and an example of loyal service but, crucially, they put 'self' aside working together as a cohesive force for good. That is their lasting example to us all and one which we may try and emulate.

Service personnel deserve selfless leaders. We need look no further than the selfless devotion of our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth who served in the armed forces in WW2 and subsequently, as we know, she has served her country, crown dependencies, dominion territories, and the commonwealth of nations for 66 years, and counting! She, however, has not relied on her own strength but on her belief and dependence on God. Similarly, in her position as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, she has given all Christian communities an example of leadership through quiet, steadfast faith.

Leaders like her give tirelessly to inspire the people they serve and reflect the selfless sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who set aside his divine sovereignty to live on earth, as though one of the foot soldiers in faith.

In the Gospel, Jesus' words give us a dynamic, alternative course of action to human reprisals. His engagement strategy was dialogue, or as Winston Churchill advocated,

“Jaw, jaw is better than war, war.” Ultimately, Jesus’ equality-policy proved too challenging for the ruling authorities to accept and so, they had him killed. In his life and death Jesus fully identified with our human sufferings.

The service personnel of WW1 and all other conflicts understood the value of standing shoulder to shoulder together sharing one another’s burdens. Similarly, in his ministry that is exactly what Jesus extended to all. Today, he still offers to shoulder our burdens in daily living, if we ask for his help.

Ultimately, just as the fallen of countless conflicts, we too will die: how brave will we be when our lives come to their close? Our Dean of the Douzaine read to us from St Paul’s Letter to the Roman’s, which reading underlines that we need not make that final journey alone nor to an unknown destination. In Jesus Christ’s resurrection and ascension, he invites us to share his risen life. If we accept his invitation, it is his eternal promise to us and our eternal hope. Just as the armed forces in WW1 faced seemingly insurmountable opposition Jesus too, despite the hostile factions ranked against him, defied them all; the crucified became the conqueror.

Soldiers, serving together, rally to a battle cry. Similarly, Christian Soldiers do not serve in isolation but have an eternal, spiritual battle cry, in these words of St Paul:

“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Amen