

Collect, Readings and Reflection for 09 November 2025, Remembrance Sunday

Collect *(the Church's prayer for today):*

God, our refuge and strength,
bring near the day when wars shall cease
and poverty and pain shall end,
that earth may know the peace of heaven
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Today's reflection is by Reader Pete Gillions.

Mark 1 v14-20. Jesus Calls His First Disciples

Jesus said "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" This morning we will be considering the meaning of those words especially in the context of this day, a day when we remember and give thanks for those who paid the price for the freedoms we enjoy today. 50 years ago I worked for a year in Linz, Austria a most beautiful part of the world. I worked there in a home that was people who were severely mentally and physically handicapped. The eldest there was only 30 years old. The reason for that was during the second world war those deemed to be not fully human were murdered in a euthanasia program. By 1945 all such handicapped people in that region had been killed. The ones in the home were the first post war generation.

Five miles from the home in Upper Austria on the top of a hill near the village of Mauthausen stands a former concentration and extermination camp. I remember cycling there one bitterly cold day. You cannot visit such a place without being deeply moved. Almost all the people taken there were there simply because they also were seen as not being fully human. Their crime was simply their race, their religion or their political beliefs. Or that they were seen to be of no value, murdered since they were too young or too old to work. And the question to ask is how could such a thing happen in a civilised European country, a cultured country that gave us such great musicians such as Mozart and Schubert.

How could such a thing happen in a civilised European country – the answer is, sadly all too easily. Just put a few things together in the mix and very quickly things can change the whole mood of a nation. Adolf Hitler, also born near Linz, did just that. Hitler created a toxic mix by first articulating a sense of felt grievance and loss. Things were not as they should be. The country was no longer as it ought to be. He seized on the sense of discontent and grievance. The second thing Hitler did was then to apportion blame, not on themselves but on to others, by finding a scapegoat. He held others responsible for the mess. In Hitler's case he pointed his finger at the Jews, tapping in to a deep root of antisemitism. The third thing Hitler did was to encourage

people rally round a charismatic leader who offered simple solutions to complex problems and promised to hold the so called guilty to account. Three simple steps; firstly a genuine sense of grievance, secondly someone we can point our finger at as being the source of the problem, and thirdly a charismatic leader who offer simple solutions. As I say, a toxic mix that led to one of the most depraved and shameful episodes in all of human history. Today we honour the memory of those who strived to overthrow such a despicable regime and liberate the oppressed.

To honour the memory of such sacrifice the post war generation aspired to create a fairer society, a more decent and kinder place. A place where children would flourish. Looking around its fair to say that is not what we see. Speaking in Leeds Minster Jon Kuhrt, who works for a national Christian charity supporting people who have been homeless summed up the sort of country we live in today. . He said this “We are living in times of significant change, of significant anger, of real anxiety. Consensus is breaking down, polarisation is breaking out. And the evidence is seen both on line and on our streets. Wealth and property are increasingly held by a smaller and smaller number. Our housing crisis deepens and trust and confidence in our mainstream political parties is at rock bottom. And these divisions and tensions are fuelled by social media corporations who are making vast amounts of money by using algorithms designed to appeal to the worst human instincts and that feed a collective addiction to anger. A diet of content curated to plays on our insecurities and to bloat our own sense of righteousness” – John said there is little cause for vague optimism - but yet as Christians we can still speak a message of Hope

So what is that message of hope. Listen again to the voice of Jesus. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” We are each called by Christ to repent and believe the good news! In a world of gloom and doom where problems appear to be magnifying and solutions hard to find Christ calls us to repent and believe the good news. So what might that mean for each of us? Perhaps it is helpful firstly to make clear what it does not mean. The last thing it means is that all that is happening doesn't really matter because at the end of the day you're going to heaven so all will be well. That sort of individualistic pietism that seeks to lift our concern us from all the problems we see us is not the good news of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is far more radical than that.

To put it simply turning to Christ in repentance and faith is the best step anyone can take because it changes everything. Repentance is recognising who we truly are, a mixture of good and bad, of achievement and failure, of contentment and regret. Believing the good news is the revelation of the wonder of God's love for you, God's love for the you that you know yourself to be. It is in the gospels we see Gods love shine through in the ministry of Christ. His compassion for those in need, his acceptance of the outsider. His bringing heaven to earth in His miracles and healings. And of course the one place we see that most clearly is on the cross at Calvary where ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only son.’ (John 3v16)

The light of revelation shows us who we truly are and that by His grace we are truly loved. By God's grace we are reoriented to become who we were truly meant to be. everything changes, changes in relation to our understanding of ourself and our relationship with God. And of course it changes the way we see others – that they are also equally loved by God whether they realise it or not. So each and every one of us is of intrinsic worth. The Kingdom of God is at hand when individuals turn to God in Christ. The Kingdom of God is at hand when those individuals then become part of a new community, a community based and bathed in God's love, a community called the Church. The Kingdom of God is at hand when both individuals and Churches are led by Gods spirit engage in the process of healing this broken world.

John Kuhrt spoke of the Hope we share - a firm hope based on what God has done through Christ, what he is doing by His Spirit and that He will one day complete. Hope is woven in to the very DNA of our faith. Whatever difficulties people face Hope is a vital ingredient of transformation. Hope unlocks a sense that the future can be different to the past. That there is something to aim for, something to live for.

We can all play our part in honouring the memory of the fallen. The war memorial in Skipton show a man straining every sinew to break a sword. To help bring something of the Kingdom of God to earth is just that – it calls us to serve Chris faithfully in this our generation. It call us to speak of the hope we find in Christ. We honour the memory of the fallen by each taking responsibility to play our part, whatever that is. That is our calling as individuals and as a Church. So be encouraged by the words of Jesus "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Amen

A word of Prayer:

Heavenly Father open our hearts to your call to each of us to Repent and Believe.

Enlighten our hearts to know more of your love for each of us.

Help us share the Hope that looks beyond the headlines to believe that the time has come, that the Kingdom of God has come near. Amen