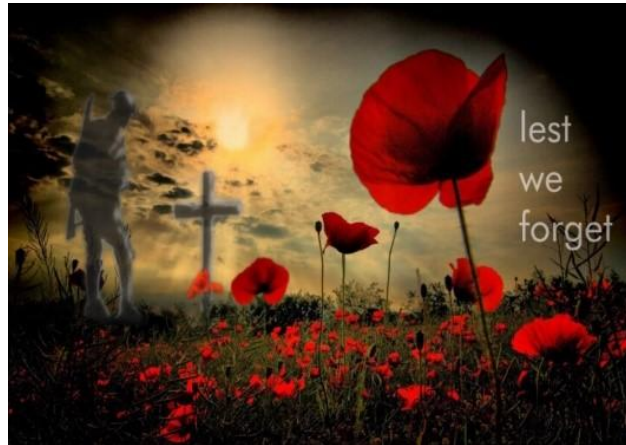


We will re-member....



Remembering. It's an interesting word – the opposite of dis-membering. To dis-member something means to pull it part, leaving it destroyed.

War comes from a process of dis-membering. From all sorts of different pressures of greed, mis-use of power and oppression that twist and corrupt hearts into acts of violence and terror. From the need of men and women to stand against that in the world, and put themselves into harm's way in the name of justice. From all those disfigured and whose lives are cut short. From the innocent who get caught up in conflict; lives and homes destroyed. From the impact, even, on our environment – the damage to land and plants and animals. It dis-members society, and the world we live in, pulling us apart as a civilisation and leaving deep wounds.

But when we *re-member* we do what the word suggests. As we remember those whose lives have been destroyed in so many ways in war ... in a way they are put together again in our hearts, minds and prayers. Re-remembering in love and prayer is, in a way, an act of healing and restoration, drawing us into compassion and empathy, honouring and treasuring the people, the stories, and the love and lives broken within tragedy.

Do this in memory of me, Jesus says at the Last Supper, before his crucifixion, when he is giving his disciples strength to get through to, and live into the Resurrection to come, and make it their own. Jesus shows them the broken things, and promises them he is within them – he promises he can work within broken bodies and spilt blood, to bring peace, hope and new life. Do this, he says. Tell this story. Trust in this truth. *Do this in memory of me*.

Jesus tells us that memory, and story are absolutely essential to healing and hope. And that, somehow, in that remembering, there is an active commitment, a way of becoming channels of his life and peace into a world so broken by violence. You are now my body, he says. He teaches us to take responsibility for each other, and for the world.

Remembering becomes a commitment for the future. And we stand in that place today. Remembering the stories, honouring those who gave their lives standing in the face of violence. We stand also alongside those who are still in active service in the name of justice and peace, and we commit our hearts as places of peace through justice. For it is only through justice that peace can make whole.

Remembering after all, brings with it the promise and reality of Resurrection. And resurrection is the life-force that speaks from within the darkness of evil, and says *do not despair*.

It might be easy when we look back over history and see the pain and loss that has been, and when we look at the news these days, and see the pains and violences of our present times... to do exactly that. To despair. But Jesus promises us that life, love and healing are always the stronger force. He promises us that his ability to bring life from death is something that he shares with us – that no situation is truly beyond redemption. And as he shares our death with us, and his resurrection with us, he binds us into a greater story that stretches beyond this place and time. We are entrusted with our chapter, our story, as part of the great woven story of all humanity, and indeed all creation. We become responsible for each other – for those who come after us in the story, and for those who came before. We become part of one family, all across the world, and all through time. What we do matters, not just now... but beyond our immediate vision.

As we remember, we remember that too.

Jesus shares his grace for life and healing with us, from within the darkness and the evil and the broken things. He re-members us, and teaches us to re-member. He puts us back together, to walk in the ways of love, peace and justice, even as we recognise their cost.

Did you know that the average poppy plant produces 17,000 seeds? But many of these seeds can remain dormant in soil for between forty to a hundred years, only coming to life when cultivation or disturbance brings them to the surface. Perhaps this was why it was an ancient symbol of resurrection – reaching back into Ancient Egypt and the pagan mythologies, never mind the Jewish and Christian traditions.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing,
fly scarce-heard amid the guns below.

In 1915, the fields of Flanders turned red with poppies. The battles in Belgium had churned up the earth, and the poppy seeds were awakened.

In the midst of all that pain and blood and despair there was a defiant small seed, which spoke of the glory of the Resurrection. Of life, of hope, of possibility.

Mona Michael, A YMCA worker, was so moved that she vowed to wear a poppy for the rest of her life. In 1921 a YMCA friend of Mona's passed some examples of artificial poppies to the newly formed British Legion, and from that day to this that ancient symbol of Resurrection has remained a symbol of Re-membering.

As we tell the stories today; as we re-member in love, and prayer; as we commit ourselves to peace and justice, we do our work of re-membering. Of healing, and working and committing to making things whole once more.

We pledge ourselves today to live and work for a tomorrow where hatred, division, war and injustice will be no more. We honour those who have gone before us – those crosses in Flanders field, that represent so many marked and unmarked graves. And we thank God for the glory of the poppies, that every tiny seed is known by name to him, and every human life held in love and honour.

And if we feel small, and the darkness seems deep, let us remember the tiny little poppy... and its seeds. For where we stir and cultivate a world of brokenness with the disturbance of an insistence on love, peace and hope...

Life will and can spring up anew.

And we can look at all those that have been before. All those whose lives are right now being torn apart, and we commit ourselves as pieces of the resurrection power of love and life and truth in the world.

We do this in memory of you, we say, we will re-member.