

We gather to remember the fallen, those who have died in war.

We often focus on the great war, as it known before there was a second great war

Because it was after that war that Remembrance day was introduced.

Sometimes we focus on the 2nd world war, because there are people that were there, survivors, those who can tell us what it was like.

And the 2nd World War was a very moral war - because we found out about Auschwitz and Belsen and the concentration camps, this seemed a war that was more than just because of wanting land or oil or egos.

We feel more right about going to war, and that those who died died for good.

But since those main wars there have been so many lesser ones, and other theatres of conflict (as they are euphemistically called) where people have died. The Vietnam War, the Falklands, Serbia / Croatia including genocide, the First and Second Gulf wars, Afghanistan, as well as the current wars in Sudan, Ukraine, and Palestine / Israel.

The world knows little peace. (And I assume that you are here today because you want peace)

Historians say that The Crimean War of 1853 is supposedly the first which had special newspaper correspondents, and war artists. And the shock and horror, not to mention the disastrous charge of the light brigade, brought down the government back home.

Our modern experience of war reporting, with live video images, satellite picture, mobile phones, 24 hours news reporting seems too unfiltered. Its hard to tell between a computer shoot em up game, the news, or some film or drama - its all confused, I've become numb to the horror. Others are simply overwhelmed - it is too much. I've heard of so many people who say they cannot hear the news anymore.

And despite all this news and technology I think we've all learnt that truth is the first casualty of war.

After the hospital was bombed in Gaza both sides claim it is the other.

Both sides claim misinformation and AI fakery.

And although one side is responsible, I doubt we will ever know for certain.

It is now, despite all teh news, even harder to know what is really going on.

One side says this, another that.

And this is not a good vs evil war.

There are good lovely Israeli people

There are good lovely Palestinians.

And there are good Ukrainians and good Russians.

Its hard to see what either side really wants to achieve or how killing so many people would be the best way of doing that.

What could be worth 80,000 Russian lives and 80,000 Ukrainian lives - that's the population of Bournemouth wiped out?

Or what could really be worth 10,000 Palestinian lives and 1400 Israeli lives?

That's everyone in Ringwood or Verwood - gone. Silent, Empty. The whole lot.

And whatever sadness or anger such huge loss evokes in us, there is also a huge amount of helplessness, fatigue, depression.

What on earth can we do, so far away, with so little power.

We look away, for our own protection.

But maybe this is a chance to do something. To Change.

Remembrance Day, set up after that first world war,

Set up to remind people of the sacrifice of war.

To remind us and our government - that whatever the size of numbers - each person is important, valuable, worth something, loved, missed.

We do not want our government to forget the price of the wars they choose to engage in.

Every name on this memorial - we know who they were, where they died.
They were someone's friend and child.

And its important to bring it from the big numbers, or the causes and rights and wrongs, down to the individual, the human, to you and me.

Because conflict is about how we treat each other. How we see each other.

Hitler was able to persecute the Jews by telling the German people that Jews were shifty, not to be trusted. That they were less important than true Germans, that they were not proper people, less human. Its how the British Empire dealt with slaves - the church said, to our shame, that black people had no souls.

And that is how wars happen - because people stir up prejudice, ignorance and hatred, against other groups of people.

So some Israelis tell stories about Palestinians, and some Palestinians tell stories of Israelis.

And we don't need to look far to see how you and I are caught up in that too.

Our government insists on calling those who are fleeing war or persecution , not 'refugees' but 'illegal immigrants'. They '**other**' them. They say **they're** taking our jobs, and stealing our NHS. They want to herd **them** onto boats, ship **them** far abroad, as if they are not people like you and me.

I know people who say - ahh the travellers are coming to Dorset - lock the car parks, double lock the shed, look out for unusual strangers in the village. As if they are not people.

I know people who tell me they hate the 'woke agenda' - why do people need to go on about gays or trans or gender identity? As if those people are not human, as if who they are does not matter.

It might seem as if your opinion is harmless. What does it matter if you're homophobic or racist against the travellers?

Because that's where it starts.

It starts with fear of the unknown - they're different to me - and I don't feel safe.

Fear leads to suspicion and blame, which leads to hatred.

And then it doesn't take much to wanting to keep ourselves 'safe', someone suggests getting the pitchforks and soon people are dying.

I think the best way of honouring all those who have died, is to work for peace.

If you want peace in the world, then it starts in here, in you and me.

If there are groups and people that you don't like, I suggest getting to know them.

Whether they are gay or a traveller or a refugee.

You will discover that they are human like you. There will be things you have in common and differences, there will be things you agree on, and things you disagree on.

Jesus instruction to 'love our enemies as we love ourselves' is not just for other peoples benefit.

If we cannot love our enemies then we cannot love ourselves.

How can there be peace in ourselves, while we fear the other?

We fear what we do not know, the stranger, the outsider, the other.

Once we get to know them, we no longer need to be afraid, and we can be at peace.

Only when we love our enemies, can we truly love our whole selves.

This is the way to bring peace.

Let us use all our goodness to overcome our fears and prejudices,
To reach out to those who are different, to those with whom we disagree,
And build bridges of understanding, trust and friendship.

Goodness is stronger than evil.

Love is stronger than hate.

Light is stronger than darkness.

Life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours through Him who loves us!

~Archbishop Desmond Tutu