

Give Peace a Chance (Nov 6th, Remembrance Sunday) 1 Peter 3:8-18

Last year was the 100 year anniversary of the poppy. There is story that appeared in a comic strip called "For Better or Worse". It's about a mother who buys a poppy for her young daughter called April. As she pins it on her daughter, April asks, 'why do we wear poppies?' So, her mother explains about the poem called "In Flanders Field". Then April asks, 'why do I have to wear a poppy when I don't really know what war is?'

The mother gives the little girl a hug and says, 'perhaps not knowing what war is, is the best reason of all for this act of remembrance.'

Sadly, I think this year there will be too many children wearing poppies that **do know** what war is. Even though we may try to protect young eyes, TV and social media have been filled with images from Ukraine of bomb blasts, and buildings in ruins. As we see the Ukraine flag flying outside peoples homes, and wonderful fundraising dinner to support refugees – we have become more aware that there is a war going on right now.

But, perhaps we have only become more aware of war because it somehow seems closer to home, now that it is white, and happening in Europe. Because in reality, this last year there have been wars going on in Myanmar, Ethiopia, S. Sudan, Syria, Yemen and more ...

There are millions of children around the world, who might not wear a poppy this week, but who understand the horrors of war all too well.

For many people war is the normal state of existence. You may have heard of the term 'outbreak of war' – well for many it would be wonderful release to have 'an outbreak of peace.'

War is not a new phenomenon. It is a scary thought, but in the last 3400 years, only 268 of those years have been entirely at peace! 268 might seem like a big number, but it's just 8% of all time in recorded history. WOW!

Conflict is so prevalent, that some people now believe that war is a normal human condition. And it is true that we are quick to defend our property, our rights, and our privileges.

If we hear a harsh word from someone, our response is often to say a harsher word back, or perhaps a clever put down, or maybe even a physical response.

And yet, we come here today, on Remembrance Sunday, not to remember war and violence, but to remember the peace and the freedom that people have fought for.

We come here today to remember the revolutionary message from the one we call Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ. He said

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called Children of God."

(Matthew 5:9)

Sometimes at Remembrance Day we focus our thoughts on all those who fought for this country – their sacrifice and their willingness to give their lives.

But sometimes we lose the focus of the **reason why** those lives were lost.

Why those people were willing to die.

Sometimes we do not remember to see our armed forces as *'peacemakers and children of God.'*

And sometimes we forget that we too are called to be peace makers.

How can we do that? How can we be peace makers?

Conflict almost always begins with power mongering, and often continues with a struggle over who is right and who is wrong. And sometimes the underlying issues of the conflict can be easily resolved by listening to both sides - such as should we have pews or chairs in a place of worship? – some of you may even remember that conflict?

Not everyone always agrees with the outcome of such disputes, but such conflicts do usually get peacefully resolved.

Other conflicts can be much harder to resolve peacefully.

It might be a struggle over land and sovereignty – such as in Ukraine and Russia;

It might be a struggle over cultural dominance, such as in Ethiopia and Myanmar.

It might be a struggle over democracy and the political right to choose, such as in neighboring country, USA.

Or it might be more in our own back yard, where as Canadians and as people of faith, we are called to stand together, and to speak out against injustice, against racism, against sexism, against harassment, and bullying and unacceptable behaviour.

We are called to be peace makers.

Being a peace maker is not easy.

But our scripture reminds us that it *"is to this that we are called."*

Being a peace maker is not easy, and yes there are usually consequences. But again, our scripture reminds us *"even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed."*

Being a peace maker is not easy, and yes it requires us to stand strong in our truth and our faith. But scripture reminds us: *(we) must turn from evil and do good;(we) must seek peace and pursue it.*

Jesus knew that speaking for peace against the Empire was not easy, and he knew that it would lead to his death.

Our veterans and soldiers that we remember today, knew that standing up for peace against power mongers was not easy, and it would mean risking their lives. We know that being agents of peace and justice, can come at immense personal cost to us too.

But, I would suggest that perhaps the best way to honor and remember our veterans today, is to follow their action, and to continue to bravely call out for that path of peace, a path that they bravely fought for.

There is a world organization called "the World Peace Flame". It is built on a vision of a peaceful future. Their dream is:

"Imagine if every man, woman and child, in every nation and country, from every religion and creed, were united in peace." <https://www.worldpeaceflame.org/>

I'll say that again.

"Imagine if every man, woman and child, in every nation and country, from every religion and creed, were united in peace."

That is quite a dream!

Peace flames have been built and lit in communities on all five continents around the world. As the flames burn, countries unite in this dream of a peaceful future.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Anann, said,

"Together we can build a better world for succeeding generations, if we only summon the will. We are each responsible, in our own way, for nurturing the culture of peace for the sake of our children and grandchildren."

There is a deep truth in this statement.

Each of us are responsible for our own acts of peace.

Our lives need to be filled with loving kindness and thoughts of how to be a person of peace. Being a person of peace means that we are not to be silent bystanders and watch as injustice and power mongering occurs around us.

Jesus tells us:

'We are called to be loving and pure in heart.

We are called to show mercy and forgiveness, even when we are insulted and persecuted.

We are called to be peacemakers.

The motto of the World Peace Flame is:

"Nothing we do changes the past, but everything we do now creates the future."

In our act of Remembrance today and tomorrow, let us pause to remember the past – but let us also pause to make a promise to 'do our bit' in creating a future of peace. It begins with each one of us. Here! Now!

I invite you now to reflect on that thought, as we silently watch this video. The words of the song remind us of the ways that we can show honor: by loving, forgiving, and giving.

Let their stories make a difference for peace on earth.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaRsOPf3M5s>

Amen.