

Reading: John 15:9-17

Theme: Remember...

Remember what? There are always things to remember – *Remember, remember! The fifth of November, The Gunpowder treason and plot; or Remember you're a Womble*; or remember this, remember that. In other words – do not forget... We can remember we are loved and cared for, but at times we can forget and fail to appreciate all the blessings that we have. So what things are we to remember today?

As a church we are **remembering the Shoebox** appeal as we remember with sadness those who are in great need, *though not our main focus today*. There are always appeals going on for many good causes, and we have much to give thanks for in our land - safety, peace, a measure of health and health service that we do not always appreciate. We have possessions, we may have jobs or funds from government in pensions or benefits. No doubt many of us are planning for Christmas and all the joy and festivity is we hope that will bring. The short video we saw earlier showed us how much we have to be thankful for. We know we are not living in a perfect land of bounty and fairness, but so many blessings can be taken for granted by all of us e.g. when the water went off on Wednesday morning, where was our nearest well and where would our clean drinking water come from or would we have to wash our clothes in the River Don! Yes, we are to remember those in need and help as we are able

to do so and filling and sending these shoeboxes are expressions of gratitude out of the good things we have to those who have so little and need many things.

We know that today is **Remembrance Sunday**, we can remember the horrors of war – not only WW1, but other conflicts in the past century. WW1 was originally termed the Great War, the war to end all wars and with sadness we remember that hope quickly evaporated. We are to remember with gratitude those who gave their tomorrows for our todays. It is to amaze us and awe us that people from all ages, backgrounds and nations left their security, jobs and countries to serve on the battlefields and in many other ways. The youngest British soldier to die in WW1 was only 14 - he had lied about his age to enlist. This was because he and many others were determined to answer the call to serve their country in what they considered a just war. Would **we remember** to answer the call if our country needed it? We hope and pray such a situation will never arise and no other global conflict happens, especially considering the awesome weapons available in our time.

While we can look back and remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, those severely affected through the years as a result of such service, we are to remember them by giving them respect and support as we are able through the Royal British Legion appeals and other charities operating in this country and

internationally. These charities, just like the shoebox appeals etc, cannot meet all the needs, but help those who suffer to remember they are not forgotten or abandoned. We all are in great debt to those who died, gave their lives and who have suffered in the wake of their service for the country. We are to remember and appreciate them all they sacrificed.

Today on Remembrance Sunday, we are to remember it is Sunday and on Sunday, as well as every day we are to **remember with gratitude what God has done for us.** The great God of heaven did not need to do anything for us. He made the world perfect - with no wars, pain, diseases, natural disasters or suffering of any kind. We cannot imagine that, it must have been paradise - exactly what the garden of Eden was, for it was a place designed for the human race to enjoy God's creation in perfect harmony, including a perfect relationship between Adam and Eve. Sadly, they blew it by disobeying God, introduced corruption into the perfect place and judgement was brought upon mankind and creation. Adam and Eve were the ultimate vandals and the graffiti of their disobedience is daubed throughout all creation and history.

Punishment came upon them and through them, upon all their descendants - sickness, pain, suffering, disasters, disease and death. We suffer the consequences of their disobedience and rebellion. This world is nothing like it

was designed to be when it first came from God's creative hand. Basically, mankind is doomed and without hope if left to ourselves. Throughout history, the whole world over, people have tried to make ways to be accepted by and acceptable to God. There are many world religions and all tell us what we have to do to make ourselves right with God. Yet the Bible tells us it is impossible for us to get right with God through the DIY ways we devise. Religion is about what we do to be right with God, Christianity says it has all done for us by God!

On Sundays and every day, Christians remember that God made the only way for us to be right with Him. He planned it even before mankind made a mess of things and blew it for themselves. He planned the way for men and women, boys and girls to be right with Him. It wouldn't be a World War, but would involve a tremendous battle and great suffering for and to His one and only Son, who we know as Jesus.

Just as people had to travel from different parts of the world to the theatres of war in which they were involved, so God the Son left all the glory of heaven and entered into the theatre of battle - the Earth. He didn't come in all His glory and splendour, but as heaven's best came on this rescue mission to give us our liberty and freedom; He took to Himself a real body. It should amaze us that God the Father and God the Son would do that for us - as we would

all want to do things our own way and ignore God and His ways.

Jesus lived a perfect life and willingly, voluntarily went to the cross of Calvary in our place so that we can be rescued, spared the consequences of our wrong, our sin and rebellion against God - for we actively go against Him and what He requires of us. The cross of Jesus was where we should have been punished and yet He sacrificed Himself in our place so that we can know God's love, forgiveness, pardon and acceptance. On TV news on Friday morning, they were in the Commonwealth graveyard in Mons, France where both the first and the last British casualties of the war are buried – the last to die just 90 minutes before the armistice – shot by a sniper. In all Commonwealth War grave yards there is always erected a cross of sacrifice to help people to remember the sacrifice of those who are buried there. Have we seen that the cross of Calvary was the cross of the sacrifice of God's own Son so that we can have eternal life?

The Bible verse quoted in our PowerPoint earlier says (John 15v13) *“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* Yet the Bible says in Romans 5v8 & 10 *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were **still sinners**, Christ died for us. For if, **when we were God's enemies**, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much*

more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

We should be amazed that the great God of heaven would do that for us, also we should have great sadness that we are the cause of His death and suffering for Him to make the only way to God – for His is the once and for all sacrifice that made the way safe for us to go to Him. At the same time, we are to realise there is hope for people like us, Jesus didn't come to save, rescue only nice and religious people, but came for whosoever will recognise what He did was for them and trust Him as their Saviour. What a hope to have, that none of us are too bad, too old or too young, or too nice to be accepted by God when we trust Jesus as our Saviour.

If God did all that at such great cost to Himself and His Son, then we should be determined to accept all He wonderfully provided and remember He did it for us as individuals. In the preaching of the apostles in the NT, they proclaimed we have to go to Jesus as our only hope and way of salvation, that we need to tell Him that we don't deserve it and fall short of His standards, but as we do so, we realise He has promised that everyone who does that will be accepted by God, have all their wrong forgiven and be given eternal life.

If God has provided all that, then we are not to treat it as a small thing, as something insignificant. Today, as we

remember the sacrifice of so many in wars to preserve and secure our freedom from tyranny and oppression, we are to remember the Lord Jesus' greater sacrifice to secure us true freedom and peace with God. When we know the new life that God gives, we are to live it out and let it show - not so that we would just be good and nice people, but we would live our lives God's way to please Him who has given us so much and will give us even greater things when the time comes for us to die.

While we may not be able to remember important things in areas like exams, what we should have bought from the shops, the millions of names for those who died to secure our freedom and peace, yet now we have the opportunity to remember the One who is heaven's best, the Lord Jesus, who came into this world as the perfect sacrifice to secure our eternal freedom and peace with God and to give us a home in heaven.

Every Sunday in this church we delight to celebrate the death of the Lord Jesus as we take bread and wine - to remember that His body was broken and His blood was shed when He sacrificed Himself for us. It is not because the gruesome, but because of all the great things He achieved for us in His death. Yet that is only part of the story, because we know that He rose again on the 3rd day, never to die and has gone to heaven to do good things in their lives for all who trust in Him, to be able to welcome all those who will go to Him for the first time. Our

remembrance looks backward to what He did, upwards to where He is and what He is doing and also, we remember the great things He has promised to do in the future for those who believe in Him.

If you want to know any more about who Jesus is, what He has done for us and what He can do for you, then I invite you to chat to us about these things either today over refreshments, or arrange another time to do so in more detail. When we know Him as our Saviour, the wonderful thing is He knows us and will always remember us.