



Pastor's Page

"Time to Remember"

It was Saturday evening and all was still apart from a distant glow in the night sky. Looking out of the living room window my mother was amazed at this most spectacular firework display. But the thing that brought great excitement to her as a 9 year old child brought untold fear to her parents who understood the reality of the Manchester blitz. Concerned for his mother who lived in the centre of town, and with no buses running, my Grandfather cycled 9 miles the next morning to his parents' house to make sure they were ok. On arrival he discovered that his mother had been at a meeting during the previous night's air raid and had run home dodging the explosions by ducking into passing shop entrances! When she got back she found her husband asleep and the bedroom window smashed. She woke him and asked about the window, "Oh" he said, "a piece of shrapnel smashed it and then set the bed on fire but I managed to put it out and get back to sleep alright!!!" (The year was 1940)

It's impossible for most of us to imagine what it must be like to live through the horrors of war. This is how one correspondent reflected on the 1914-18 war "The area of Northern France known as Flanders and Picardy saw some of the worse fighting in the First World War. There was complete devastation. Buildings, roads, trees, and natural life simply disappeared. Where once there were homes and farms there was now a sea of mud – a grave for the dead where men still lived and fought. Only one other living thing survived –The poppy - flowering each year with the coming of the warm weather, bringing life, hope, colour, and reassurance to those still fighting". So moved was John McCrea (A doctor serving with the Canadian forces) that in 1915 he wrote a poem which began "In Flanders fields the poppies grow". When the First World War ended and the guns fell silent on the battlefields of Europe, thousands had died and thousands more had been scared by their experiences. Thanks to Moina Michael (an American war secretary) the tradition of wearing a poppy emblem to remember the dead and raise money for their families and ex-servicemen in need was born.

Today we should remember too. Firstly remember with gratitude all those who gave their lives in two World Wars in order that we might live in freedom and peace. Secondly remember those who are losing their lives today in especially those in Afghanistan. We should pray for the families of these soldiers and civilians caught up in warfare and pray that peace may come soon. We should also remember the evil nature of war and ask God to help us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, remembering that Jesus' way is the way of forgiveness and not revenge. Remember Jesus said; "Greater love has no-one that this, that he lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus himself made this ultimate sacrifice, for us. And just as those blood red Poppies sprung up in Flanders fields bringing hope and life amidst the stench of death so the cross of Jesus offers eternal hope to all people as the Saviour of the world dies and rises again in glorious victory.

So let's wear our poppies today and remember both the sacrifice of those brave soldiers and also the sacrifice of the Son of God.

8th November 2009