

6 Here on Mount Zion the Lord Almighty will prepare a banquet for all the nations of the world - a banquet of the richest food and the finest wine. 7 Here he will suddenly remove the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all the nations. 8 The Sovereign Lord will destroy death forever!

The readings today are Isaiah 25: 1-9, Revelation 22: 1-5 and Matthew 5: 38-48.

REMEMBRANCE – THOUGHT FOR TODAY

During the time of Remembrance, we do not just remember all those who gave up their lives for our freedom and liberty, we also remember those who were also victims of war and conflict. All those whom we have loved and who have gone on before us to be with our Lord we remember today.

It is not a sad day, for some it will be, but today there can also be delight in remembering a loved one killed in action in a war. For most of us today it is about respect, it is about honouring our war dead, both service men and women, and civilians killed in conflicts throughout the world, we do not take sides, we remember. But today's remembrance also brings an added poignance to it, for we are in the middle of a pandemic, which has affected us all in different ways, so today we also remember those who have died because of Covid19 and we remember those who have served in the Army, Navy and Air Force but also the civilian Medical personnel who battled alongside them and still do today. But today is also about hope, and God is that hope for a hopeless and lost world. Where many have feared and despaired those who have faith stand strong for as the prophet Isaiah tells us: *6 Here on Mount Zion the Lord Almighty will prepare a banquet for all the nations of the world - a banquet of the richest food and the finest wine. 7 Here he will suddenly remove the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all the nations. 8 The Sovereign Lord will destroy death forever! He will wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes and take away the disgrace his*

people have suffered throughout the world. The Lord himself has spoken.

Today we remember because there is hope. Hope because God remains faithful. *“For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm.”* Isaiah tells us that death is not the end that for those who believe and serve God. This is because God has prepared a banquet, a banquet for all the nations of the world. *“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.”* This is the eschatological feast of God, which relates to death, judgment and the final destiny of the soul and humankind. This is where God will bring peace and harmony where there was once sorrow and strife. The rich food mentioned in the banquet is symbolic of great spiritual blessings and that is one of the reasons the men and women stood up and done their duty, to serve where others wouldn't to ensure we could live in freedom and enjoy the lives we do today, because they had faith knowing that there is something better, something to fight for, that is why we are told: *“He will suddenly remove the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all nations....He will wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes...”*

Only a loving caring God would and does do that. For all those who have served in the armed forces of the crown or who have stood up to dictators and other men and women of evil, they now lie at rest with the Lord. It is faith that allows men and women to stand up and be counted in times of trouble and it is faith that keeps them strong when all around them is failing. Because like Isaiah they say: *“He is our God! We have put our trust in him, and he has rescued us. He is the Lord! We have put our trust in him, and now we are happy and joyful because he has saved us.”*

There are evil people within our society who are hell bent in causing disruption, for they do not care for the sacrifice of the world wars and the many conflicts since. They only care about their own selfish desires, we see that clearly with the Covid

pandemic, people ignoring the rules because it stops them doing what they want, and even then many ignore the rules and end up causing more misery for the rest of us. But instead of being angry towards these people, we instead like the Lord should pray for them. We as Christian men and women of faith have stronger words, words of faith, words of courage, words of hope spoken by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, he told us not to give in to hatred or to give in to the desire for revenge at the death of a loved one, for sadly many are angry and want justice for the loss of loved ones who have served in the military or who have died because of Covid. Instead Jesus tells us quite plainly *"You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you... You have heard that it was said, "Love your friends, hate your enemies.' 44 But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. Because You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Jesus also tells us *"Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."* Today let us remember all those who were left behind and who stood up in another way, a way that meant they looked after each other, who visited neighbours, who shared what they had so that all had food, warmth and clothing, just like many do today during a different type of conflict. Let us remember them and their own sacrifice and give thanks to God for His provision. Instead of hating and being angry let us today pray, after all prayer is one of the practical ways we as Christians show the love of God, so let us show that love to those who need it today, the lonely, the widows and widowers who have lost loved ones in conflict, to those who have lost loved ones due to Covid. Today is a reminder that war can destroy lives, but I urge you to remain faithful to God and to Christ, for he has shown us the way, for he is the way, the truth and the life. Also **"Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

PRAYER

Almighty God, in you alone we find safety and peace. We commend to your gracious keeping all the men and women who serve in the Navy, the Army and the Air Force, who face danger and put their lives at risk so that others might live in safety. We especially today remember those who at this time have committed themselves to bringing peace to the troubled areas of our world and especially in our hospitals and care homes in the UK and throughout the world. We also remember those who remain at home and the men and women of our Police, Fire service and Medical personnel who are also in the front line of danger from infection, terrorism and unprovoked violence on a daily basis as well as the men and women of our Search and Rescue and Life-Boat crews. Defend them day by day by your heavenly power; and help them to know that they can never pass beyond the reach of your care. Keep alive in them and in us your vision of that peace which alone we must seek and serve.

We thank you for the men and women who fought in the two world wars, and in the numerous conflict's since, for without their bravery and compassion we would not be here today, living lives free from tyranny and fear.

We ask you Lord to bless their families and be with them today as they remember their loss but help them to remember what we as a nation have gained because of their courage. Let them be a shining example for us today; never let us forget them and what it means to serve. Give us today the courage to serve as they served and bless especially our youth as we pray that they may never know the depths of cruelty to which men and women can sink. Grant that they in their generation may be faithful soldiers and servants of Christ.

Bless our friends and families and those who were our enemies, who suffered or are still suffering from war. Grant that the Love of Christ may fill our hearts today and heal the divides, bring

your people together as one we pray. Help us Lord to reach out to each other to bring love and peace to all men.

We especially remember those who have been scarred by cruelty, by war, by violence and by hatred, bring compassion to their lives and bring healing we pray.

Bless those who are without homes or families at this time, those who are refugees, those who are hungry, and those who have lost their livelihood or security. Help us to pledge ourselves to comfort, support and encourage others, that all may live in a world where evil and poverty are no more and where human life reflects the radiance of your kingdom.

Bless those who are in authority in every land and give them the wisdom to know and the courage to do what is right. Encourage those who work for peace, who seek to bring together people of different nations, faiths and colour. Bless your Holy Church today, throughout the world, by your Holy Spirit draw the scattered flock of Christ into a united visible Church to be a sign of hope to a desperate world. Grant that we who bear your Son's name may be instruments of your peace here on earth. And at last, grant that we, being faithful till death, may receive with those who have gone before, the crown of life that never fades through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.