

Sermon Sunday 14th November 2021

Remembrance Sunday

I want to recount a story for Remembrance Day in a slimmed down version of a play I watched many years ago.

4 o'clock in the morning on the eve of Remembrance Day 10th November 2021.

Sergeant Fred Brown was in charge of the guard at the main gate of an Army Barracks not far from Hadrian's Wall. There was going to be a big Remembrance Parade tomorrow so Fred was on guard at the main gate so the other younger members of the guard could make sure their uniforms were clean and pressed and their boots shining. Fred was remembering the places he had served in and his mates who had died or were wounded as well as all the soldiers who had served in the two world wars in his Regiment.

It was cold and there was a thin mist. The Chaplain said there had been an army camp on this site going back to Roman times, the Chaplain liked that sort of thing and was often found prowling around the Barracks at all times of the day and night looking for remnants from the previous armies and buildings on the site, but he was a good bloke who could be relied upon in action. At that point Fred noticed a soldier emerging from the mist, perhaps it was the Chaplain but the soldier was in a different uniform. Fred challenged him and the answer came friend, Fred; Fred was very quiet and listened.

The soldier said his name was Ron and it was like this on the 10th November 1918 quiet, misty and cold in France. He said they had been told that the war would end at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning but it was too late for thousands of men and many of his mates who had been killed

or wounded but he liked to take time to remember just like you are doing Fred. Have you seen Felix asked the soldier; Fred could not answer but he did not know any Felix unless it was the mangy cat which hung around the cook house? At that point through the mist another figure appeared wearing a long black cloak; Fred thought it was the Chaplain as he wore one like it especially when he was out at night. Ron said here he is, hello Felix, this is Fred. Greetings to you both Felix said; it's cold just like the times on Wall when we fought the raiding Picts from Scotland to stop them getting into England, they always liked a night attack. I remember a lot of good legionnaires who were killed hereabouts and many others who served in many other places. At last, Fred found his voice and asked where? Germany, France and Judah or Israel, as you know it Fred, said Felix. After a lot of warfare there I was given a good job there; I was in charge of the Governors

Guard. Normally, it was quite easy but one day we had to escort a man called Jesus to be crucified who the Jewish leaders wanted executed and riots and fighting could have broken out. The Governor did not want to kill him but he was afraid of trouble. I watched the man die on the cross and just as he died it went black like tonight and I turned to the people there and said that this man was truly the son of God. I remember Jesus and all my serving legionnaires and comrades who died, just like you Fred and Ron and millions of others. Come on Ron can't stop here talking all night there are guards to inspect, a soldier's life never ends. Goodnight, Fred they said, see you again sometime and the mist swallowed them up. Fred called the guard out and said we will all stand here now and remember the millions killed and maimed in war over the centuries and pray it stops.

God does not start war; human beings do for personal gain and control. So where is God and Jesus then? They are shown in the brave, caring, people who died for our freedom; they gave their lives for others just as Jesus did for everybody, every human being when He died on that cross witnessed by Felix who knew who he was, the Son of God sacrificed for you and me so our sins are forgiven and we will inherit eternal life in Heaven just like the countless millions killed in warfare.

Jesus tells us in chapter 13 verse 7 of Mark's Gospel 'do not be alarmed' because war and other events which are made by humans have to happen until Jesus returns as the Messiah when His peace will reign on earth.

As Christians or even decent human beings I truly believe it is for each of us to try and bring about peace in our communities and in the

world and work for the wellbeing of all human beings in this world.

So, as we remember those who have died, been wounded physically and mentally by war let us show as Christians that by living as God and Jesus taught us and 'Love our neighbour and forgive our enemies' we can change this world.

A poem by Alan Melville which like all poetry is personal but for me this tells of the armies marching home with the soldier who died still with them to remind them.

Amen.