

REMEMBRANCE 2008

The word 'remembrance' is an important one. I'd like to explore it for a moment.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition of worship (from which the word came)

- It means more than simply calling to mind a past event.
- It means something more like: 'making present a past reality for the purpose of benefiting from it today.'

In the Christian communion service, the word is used to encourage us to 'make present in our midst, the life and death of Jesus – so that we might be inspired and encouraged to more holy and wholesome ways of living.'

Today we remember the lives and deaths of the millions who have died in wars

- and not just the millions
- but also the ones – the individuals
- for each one had past, a future that was snatched from them and family who grieved for them

But if this is to be a worthy act of Remembrance,

- We seek also to make present, to make real again the appallingness of their suffering and their deaths – for a purpose.

And the purpose, surely, is this:

That we might redouble, and triple, and quadruple our efforts to work for the things that make for peace - that will make further sacrifices unnecessary. This surely, apart from making sure that they are never forgotten,

- is the way we truly honour both their memory, and their sacrifice.

And also, we should add, it is the only way to honour the efforts and suffering and deaths of those who are risking their lives today in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places round the world : to commit ourselves ever more fully to strive for the things that truly make for peace.

Here are three reflections on the things that can truly make for peace in our day:

1. Striving for justice:

- where there is inequality, there is tension
- where there is massive inequality, there will always be the risk of violence erupting
- where there is such extraordinary inequality across our world, we must strive to address it in ever more creative ways
 - a) Fairer trading systems
 - b) Greater commitment to environmental sustainability
 - c) In simply sharing our abundance

2. Seeking to share one another's burdens

It is in imperfect world – and there will be suffering.

- Resources are not where they need to be.
- Weather and earth movements cause devastation and instability.
- There are bad people who crave power and hog resources.

Suffering is a given, but it is exacerbated when some of us refuse to take our fair share of the suffering.

- if we refuse to bear what we can bear.
- If we only assert our right not to suffer
- we fail to take our part in making peace

Because, if I don't suffer, someone else will suffer for me...

3. Faith also can contribute to peace

It has been said: there were no atheists in the foxholes.

But after the two world wars of last century.

- there was certainly a re-thinking of our understanding of God.
- Jews "if God is good. Why did he not save us?"
- Christians – "if God was on our side, why did it take so long and cost us so much?"
- And many began to reflect on (1st World War army Chaplain) Studdart Kennedy's advocacy of :
 - A suffering God
 - Rather than an almighty and empirical Olympic one.

So, faith may have been re-thought

- but faith still has its place
- To enable us to grasp the wider vision and purpose of universal harmony and peace for all of creation.

Faith is what gives us:

- the hope to keep believing in the possibility of peace
- the courage to keep persevering until we find it
- the inspiration and wisdom to know what truly makes for peace
- The inner resolve to make the sacrifices that we need to make, in order truly to honour the lives of those we rightly remember today.
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