

Podcast for 13th November 2022

Remembrance Sunday

Hello and welcome to *Knowing You Jesus*. We are coming to that time of year when we remember those people who risked or gave their lives in recent wars.

Remembrance Sunday is 13th November 2022, and up at Hearsall we'll be remembering in a two-minute silence at 11am that day.

Here are some words from the Message translation of John 12, verses 20 - 25.

There were some Greeks in town who had come up to worship at the Feast. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee: "Sir, we want to see Jesus. Can you help us?"

Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip together told Jesus. Jesus answered, "Time's up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

"Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

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Today we remember.

Who are you remembering? A great grandparent or grandparent? A parent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle who served in more recent conflicts? A friend? Some of us then may indeed be remembering particular people.

Some of these people made the ultimate sacrifice and gave up their very lives. Some were seriously injured. Some suffered a lifetime of mental trauma. Perhaps you are indeed remembering a particular serviceman or service woman today.

Or maybe, like me, your connections with war are more remote. On Remembrance Day, I sometimes find myself concocting mental images of battlefield soldiers under fire, during the two minutes' silence. I do my best to make it personal, but it can still feel a little abstract. And abstraction is not ideal, for we are remembering real people who gave up their real lives for others. Everyone who served or suffered or died was loved by someone: someone's son or daughter; someone's uncle or aunt.

To help **me** at least, I found this story on the Royal British Legion website:

“Sergeant **Johnson Beharry** was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry given to members of the British military, for extreme heroism in 2004. He is one of only five living recipients of the award.

While serving as a Warrior vehicle driver with the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment in Iraq, Beharry twice risked his life to save his crew and others. Ambushed by rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun fire, his commander and gunner were both incapacitated and Beharry took the initiative to drive through withering fire out of the killing area. In order to see he had to keep his hatch open and as a result was shot in the helmet. Having driven out of the ambush, he single-handedly evacuated his platoon commander and gunner from the stricken vehicle, still under enemy fire.

The following month, recovered from his wounds, his vehicle was ambushed again. This time a rocket-propelled grenade hit the front of the Warrior exploding six inches from Beharry's head and blasting shrapnel into his face, head and brain. Severely injured, he again drove his vehicle out of the ambush, passing out into a coma once clear.

Johnson has worn his actual Victoria Cross on only three occasions; for the Queen, at his wedding and when he met Harry Patch, the last British First World War veteran. He says he is overcome by guilt when wearing it, reminded that so many other brave friends never came home alive.

As a result he loaned his medal to the Imperial War Museum but had the image of it tattooed on his back so he could always carry it with him. Speaking in 2005 after

being awarded the Victoria Cross, he said: *Maybe I was brave, I don't know. At the time I was just doing the job, I didn't have time for other thoughts.*"

Taken from: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/tribute-ink/marking-the-memories/johnson-beharry>

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So, Jesus told that simple parable of a seed dropping to the ground: a picture of dying. In the language of the Message translation, *Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.*

Today we honour many thousands of men and women who gave their lives in warfare. It's right that we do so. We remember that the peace we enjoy today was won through the sacrifices of countless others. They were like seeds dying in the ground so that many more seeds might come. They saw that life was not only about their own needs, but was about the needs of their family, their community, their nation and their world.

We may not be called to sacrifice ourselves on the battlefield, but we can all remember the same principles. A life focused only on the self is no life at all. A life lived for others is the life that goes on forever. As Jesus said:

So Jesus has that knack of saying it. If you cling onto it, if you protect it, jealously guarding everything that you just have on your own, then you lose your life altogether. But if you somehow learn to let go and reach out to others and care for others, then you have life, that's what it means to have life: reckless in your love you have life forever: real life, eternal life.

Today we remember. If you look at the parts of the English word *remember* it can be read as re-member, suggesting, put the, members, ie put the parts, back together again. We remember Jesus. We remember those who suffered and died in war. And in re-membering, we are sharing the reality again that they are part of us, and we are

part of them. A person living for himself or herself alone has no life to speak of. We belong together. We find life in each other. We re-member each other.

And so, knowing Jesus personally isn't simply about a holy person having a hotline to God; their direct connection with the Almighty... It's not only about a one-way connection with heaven, but in knowing one another and being connected with one another, sharing life with other people, well, in a way that's the same as knowing Jesus, for Jesus brings us all into unity and oneness. We find life in each other. We remember each other. Jesus is the great rememberer; the one who brings us all back together again.

Who are you remembering right now? And is there someone still living that you need to remember? To call. To meet. To help. To embrace. We belong together.

In John Donne's immortal words:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

... Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Every man's death diminishes me. I accept Donne's point. But the deaths of the heroes we remember today also **enhance** our lives, for they won the freedom we enjoy today. And as we remember them, we know they still belong to us, for they belong to God, and we belong to God, and so we all belong together.

A word connected with the kind of remembering I'm talking of today is solidarity. We live in solidarity with the victims of violence, as wars continue around the world. We especially remember the people of Ukraine, as an aggressor continues to wage war on them, invading their sovereign territory, killing their people and attacking their infrastructures.

As one small way of expressing that solidarity, we at Hearsall are holding a variety concert on Friday 18th November from 7:30pm. We'll hear the Ukrainian church choir and share in a wide range of other acts. All are welcome to attend. The concert is free, but there will be a retiring collection for the people of Ukraine. I hope to see you there, because we all belong together, in solidarity with one another.

Hymn (BPW 443) **Let us Break Bread Together with the Lord**

Let us break bread together with the Lord;

Let us break bread together with the Lord:

When I fall on my knees,

With my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me.