

Remember and Be Alert
Sermon November 6, 2022

Scriptures: Amos 5:14-15 and Psalm 121:1-8

Golden Verse: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”
Psalm 46:1

During the Second World War, Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie was the Governor General of the island Malta. It was his responsibility to defend Malta. - One of their enemies, the Italian forces, had overwhelming power both in numbers and firepower, but Malta never fell to the enemy. Historians still cannot understand why the Italians did not take the island.

Dobbie was a committed Christian. He realized that God alone was his “present help in trouble”. In his first “Special Order”, he said that “with God’s help, we will maintain the security of this fortress. I therefore call upon all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God’s help and then in reliance upon Him to do their duty.” These were the words of a Christian General engaged in the Second World War. His Christian faith was a reality when he was under fire. He looked to God for strength in everything he had to do.

The ability to remember is a wonderful gift from God. Some of our memories are happy and we can recall wonderful experiences, but some of our memories are sad and we may weep as we remember them. Today, we sadly remember those men and women who served in the armed forces during the Wars. Even though the First World War ended 104 years ago and the Second World War 77 years ago, it is important that we remember that many still bear the scars of war today. It is important for us to remember those who have fought for their country, to support them, and to pray for peace.

Today we say “Thank You” to all those who made the sacrifice that we can stand here today in peace and freedom. I think that Remembrance Sunday is one of the most emotional days. Today, we stop and remember those who were sacrificing their lives for the world’s peace.

My grandfather Steve and my grandmother’s brother John were involved in the Second World War. I still remember those memories from my childhood, when on

winter evenings, neighbours gathered at our house and shared stories, and as a little boy I was listening to their memorable stories.

My grandmother's brother was a young man when he was forced to join the army. After a short time, his battalion was directed to Russia. As he shared, he experienced word by word what the Bible says in Psalm 91:7: "*A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.*" Uncle John said, "People died on both my left arm and right arm by bullets, but God kept me safe. He was my invisible shield and this is how I survived." He praised the Lord when they were surrounded by western forces, captured, and were transported to Holland to a prisoner camp. At the end of the Second World War, he got his freedom, and he walked home from Holland to Hungary which is approximately 1800 km.

My grandfather, who raised me, physically was a very strong man. During the Second World War, he passed the train station, mailing something. At that time, in the station, there was a train bringing captured Jews to Germany. He raised his voice against this terror and asked civilians to not let the train leave the station but to liberate the Jews. For this, suddenly, he was captured by three soldiers and was forced to get into the train. At the train's door, it was a fight between the three soldiers and my grandfather. As he told us, he was holding the door railings very fast and pushed himself back with his legs so they could not close the train's door behind him. Luckily, the train started to move, and he was able to push those soldiers back and he jumped off from the train's stairs, and this is how he escaped.

Uncle John told me that sixteen young people left that small town, being forced to go to the war, and only two survived. They told us that their Christian faith was a reality when they were under fire. They both looked to God for strength in the time when they remembered with great sadness those who died around them.

General Sherman, the American Civil War General, once said: "War is hell". How true it is.

Today we remember the millions of servicemen and women who gave their energy, time, and many of them their lives, in both World Wars, so that we might enjoy peace today.

Were you asking yourself why war happened during human history? Usually, war starts with a dispute between countries, or groups within a country, which subsequently becomes violent. We are not in the Garden of Eden, nor yet in the heavenly city. At this time, we cannot talk about a world peace. We are in the fallen world of human sinfulness, where evil people do horrible things to each other. We are all capable of doing real harm to our neighbour, and need the constraint of law and order, and of good government.

The Scriptures say: “*The Lord ... hates the wicked and the one who loves violence*” Psalm 11:5 and “*human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires*” James 1:20. God warns us: “*Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence*” Proverbs 3:31-32.

God is not on one side in war. Our wars cannot be fought in the name of God. Things we can do to avoid war are: to love, to support, to have a deep understanding about others’ needs, to serve our neighbours, and to pray. The biblical image of heaven, after all, is of peace and harmony. The Prince of Peace will usher in the time when “*the wolf will live with the lamb*” Isaiah 11:6. Amen