

**Remembrance**  
Jubilee Mennonite Church  
November 11, 2018

**Purpose:** To offer a space for the remembrance of loss and of living.

**Message:** As people of peace, we do well to remember the costs of war and all those who have lost security, peace

**Scripture:** Luke 6:27-38 (I will read); Deuteronomy 8:11-18 (Please read)

**I would like to work at making this a multi-voiced worship experience with opportunity for people to share about loss, memory, and peace**

See [https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/website\\_files/peace\\_sunday\\_2018\\_-\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/website_files/peace_sunday_2018_-_en_final.pdf) for ideas

Please see <https://www.evernote.com/l/APnmZqe2kPNOlZXd71EG0VJfhYBqfJ8DGrI/> for a service from AMBS upon which I would like to structure this service.

I would like to do a Minute's silence at 11:11 or as closely there to as practical

**Synopsis (though hopefully not delivered at least entirely from one voice)**

We struggle to know how to remember well. This day that calls us to remember that which should not have ever happened gets complicated for we peace warriors as we often do not know what it is to remember those who have fought in wars. What does it mean to recollect that many were lost in the world's conflagrations. World War 1 had casualties between 40 and 50 MILLION persons; and that was but the first of the major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Yet we know our own losses. Sometimes from war in the experiences of our families, or even ourselves. Some of have lost this year: loved ones, peace, health, ability. We do well to remember that the work of bringing the world to rights is that of God, and to remember the great deeds of God's hands in our lives and those all around us.

*I would like to allow for candle lighting sometime within the service as a symbol of memory*

## Luke 6:27-38

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you that listen,  
Love your enemies,  
do good to those who hate you,  
<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who abuse you.

<sup>29</sup> If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also;  
and from anyone who takes away your coat  
do not withhold even your shirt.

<sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you;  
and if anyone takes away your goods,  
do not ask for them again.

<sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.

<sup>32</sup> “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?  
For even sinners love those who love them.

<sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you,  
what credit is that to you?  
For even sinners do the same.

<sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive,  
what credit is that to you?  
Even sinners lend to sinners,  
to receive as much again.

<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.  
Your reward will be great,  
and you will be children of the Most High;  
for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

<sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

<sup>37</sup> “Do not judge, and you will not be judged;  
do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven;

<sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down,  
shaken together, running over,  
will be put into your lap;  
for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Today is a day of memory. We are called to recollect the reality of war, remember those who were a part of that war to end all wars 100 years now, and the far too many wars that have followed on after that war. It is not hard to hate war. I have long thought that we as people of peace ought to learn a good deal more military history. Not to glorify the tactics and talents of human ingenuity put into the service of killing the other, but to glean knowledge of the sheer horror of the endeavor that we might better give evidence of why the destruction of life can never be part of a loving God's intent for humanity. God is never on any side of any war, no matter how noble the arguments and justifications we might offer for one position or the next.

It is not hard to hate war because war is hell. And it is a hell of our own making. We are a people at war, supporting the various campaigns against the undefined enemy of terrorism around the war. We have grown so used to it, it no longer makes the news. I am not entirely sure how one fights a war against a tactic of war, and wonder how we might ever come to the point to say enough and declare peace. When you read the accounts of war, and the stories of those who fight the wars, it is hard to see anything but destruction to places, to people, to minds tasked to the fighting of wars. As a young man growing up in the States, I spent time with my church family discerning how to best go about the right of passage required of every 18 year old man as a conscientious objector: the required registration for the eventuality of a draft, even though such a thing is highly unlikely to ever happen. There is no box you can check to opt out, yet you are required to register all the same. In this way, and many others, I am part of the war machine. We all are in our own ways.

War for me remains remote hypothetical ideal, and it is all too easy to equate my hatred of the occupation with a hatred of the people who fight these wars. I have lived around military personnel from time to time, with people for whom the notion of going off to war was all too real. And I have always been at a bit of loss as how to understand how one could choose military service as a calling. I have seen people on airplanes in uniform, even been asked to applaud them on their way, and wondered, "Where are going? Why are you in the military? How could you, how could you do it, train to kill people, go off and fight?" Soldiers are not only victims, losing their humanity as they do the work of waging war. They also, in their killing, make others victims. And so I have hated soldiers. I have to confess that. It has made it hard to know what to do with days like today. I recognize that more than likely we gathered here have many different encounters with the ways of war. We might have had family who have fought.

We may have had families who refused. Many of us have relatives whose stories of wars haunt them and haunt us. Maybe you personally have lived things that you would love desperately to forget. We are not of one mind in this room. Which is all the more reason to sit with this today. We do well to pause; to consider the realities of war, past, present, and future. To sit in the comfort of God, even as we acknowledge our discomfort in the midst of contradictory feelings about the way of war, how we remember, and how we do right by those who have lost so much.

*2 minutes of Silence*

Spirit of peace, Christ of peace, God of peace,  
You have called us to be peacemakers in a often violent world.  
We see the horrors of war,  
the inhumanity we perpetrate on one another in the name of peace.  
We hear the cries of those who have experienced these horrors first hand  
Both those who have worn the uniforms and those who have not,  
We hear their stories,  
hear their nightmares,  
and we struggle to respond,  
To make sense of the insensible,  
To lend comfort to those who hurt still,  
To honor those who have lost much,  
Land, loved ones, identity, innocence.  
May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to  
you, O Lord, Our God. Amen.

No matter your personal experience with war has been, we can agree that we wish it would stop. We wish the world would simply stop and heed Jesus' words—Love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you. That has often been my problem with soldiers—they weren't taking Jesus seriously. They weren't loving their enemies. Often, that is what I do when I sit there and yell at the politicians, whoever they happen to be today, judging them for getting it wrong failing to be compassionate as they ought to be. But then it stuck me. If I was making them my enemy, and condemning them for not loving their enemies, what then am I doing? Simply because I choose not to make the enemies of my country my enemies, did not mean I was without enemies. What might it mean to show love for the ones who make the choices, who send people off to war, who order the missile strike that dispossess hundreds? Sure, we see the world differently, but that doesn't mean that I do not need to be loving toward them. That does

not mean that I fail in my responsibility to love those who respond differently than I to the broken world in which we all live.

We must be people of conviction, always, speaking the best we know how for the way of peace. But I am convinced that we are called to witness to what we believe, to testify that war is not the answer, that cruelty is not the way, that hardness of heart, turning our faces away from what we are doing, is not the path to peace. We are called to testify that in Jesus we have glimpsed another way, and to enable others to get a glimpse of him. We are not called so much pronounce judgment on them (apart from us) as much as we are called to grieve over their lostness, our lostness, as much as we are called to invite their repentance, together with us. Whatever we do, we do not speak as the righteous to the wicked. We speak as fellow sinners, groping to find God's light, but because we have seen a bit of the light, we are convinced that light is not to be found in war and destruction.

So what can celebrate in a day like this? Here are few ideas:

1. We can celebrate that wars end. Today 100 years ago, unimaginable suffering formally was drawn to a close. And that is good.
2. We can celebrate that we are free of the responsibility of judgement. We do not need to sort out the good from the bad, the defender from the aggressor, the innocent victim from the murderer. That is the work of the only righteous one in our midst: the Lord God almighty. We can celebrate because all who have died, all who have been wounded in body, or wounded in mind and spirit, are in the keeping of the one all-wise, all-good God, the maker and redeemer of all of us.
3. We can celebrate the wars that did not happen. As we have seen over the last years of cold war documents being declassified, there are far too many times where our whole planet stood on the decisions of the very few. And they did not come to pass. It may not be in our history books, but we can thank God for those times where the sword has turned aside.
4. We can celebrate and give thanks for those who we have known who know all too well what it is to be part of war. We can give thanks that they are in our world, and can testify, each in their own way, that we may never forget what they endured, and in not forgetting, commit all the more to never again.

5. We can choose how we remember, and recollect the entirety of those who are victims of war on all sides, not just our slice of the misery. We can choose to remember the whole of the loss within the Kingdom of God, not just those who we are encouraged to call ours.

O God, who in days of old did wonders for which none dared hope,  
who brought forth the Christ from the grave,  
to the shock and astonishment of his followers,  
who in our day has ended the deadly enmity between the U.S. and the Soviet  
Union,  
who in our day has overturned regimes which seemed both horrendously  
oppressive and incredibly strong,  
we give you thanks.

We know not how you will work in the years ahead.

We know not what exactly to hope for, to pray for.

You keep surprising us, even as you astonished the first disciples.

Yet we know who to hope in, who to pray to.

We hope in you,

we pray to you,

our God, known to us in Jesus the Christ.

And we know that in your heart is peace,  
the breaking down of enmity.

We know too that you are no god made by human hands,  
but the true God,  
the one who triumphs over sin and evil.

Because you are God,

and because we know that peace is in your heart,  
we dare to hope that there will be deeper, wider peace.

We bless you for the partial peaces which we know,  
and we anticipate with joy your further work.

Move our hearts.

Make us instruments of your peace.

In the name of Jesus the Christ, the risen, victorious sovereign of the world.

Amen.

This day calls us to the task of remembering, to putting back together that which once was, even if only to recall its brokenness in our world. Our memories are tricky things. As Kate read in Deuteronomy, from the very first we are given to forgetting, to leaving the work of God out of the picture. This is especially true for that which we grieve. When we have lost that which is dear to us, no matter what it is, we feel that loss keenly and fully. We can wonder where God might be when we have lost what is important to us. We can wonder how we invite God into a place that no longer feels like home, or at least the home that we are used to, that we long to be.

We do well to remember our losses in the light of God. We know well that life is often punctuated by that which we have lost. We give thought to those who we have loved that have gone before us into that which we cannot understand, into death. We grieve those who we have lost, and feel their absence in big and small ways, sometimes daily, sometimes only when we are reminded that the one we love is no longer part of our regular world. We grieve those who we have lost in this year, most notably Wilmer Koop, a brother of our body who has gone before us. We hold the siblings, brothers, aunts, friends, loved ones, pets, and all those who are gone from us. We miss them. We grieve them and we do well on a day such as this to hold that memory with us, and offer it to God's light.

But we know that it is not only tangible loss that brings us grief. Sometimes, it is the certainties of life, the way things are, the way we are and how we expect them to be that changes in our world. Sometimes, the adjusting to a reality that we never chose for ourselves can be as much a point of grief as anything else. We can feel alienated by the choices of others which we wish were different. We feel the loss of the way things were, the way things we expected them to be. We can grieve when our expectations of life do not pan out the way we had hoped. We grieve when our world is not as easy to move within as we might have hoped. We can feel the pangs of being different, lonely, other, and struggle to know what to do with all of this. Where can we go with our grief? Are we allowed to come before God with hearts weighed with that which we remember, that which we grieve?

Part of making sense of a day like today is to recall that God is in all of our grieving and all of our longing. Just as we recollect those who perished long ago, we also do well to name



and to bring our own griefs that are with us now. This is an opportunity to bring before God that which we remember, that which we mourn, that which we have lost.

God does not promise us a life without pain, a world without brokenness, or a reality without loss, at least not on this side of the Kingdom of God. But God does promise us this in Romans 8: 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 38-39). We are promised that we are not alone.

So let us come even as we remember the things of our world, and remember the things of our hearts. Remember them. Recall them. Name them to yourself and acknowledge the loss. Then you are invited to bring that grief before God and light a candle, holding in the light of God's love even this, as we recall the love of God that is present to us come what may.

O Lord our God,  
we thank you for the many people  
who have been our body; your hands, your feet, reaching to us.  
We give thanks for the loves of our lives,  
Big and small,  
Human or not,  
Near to hand, or far away.  
God, when we are cut off from that which we love, that which we know,  
That which we expect,  
It causes us pain.  
We are left to pick up the pieces.  
Whenever we have lost, be in this year, or decades ago,  
we have to rebuild our lives somehow new,  
to adjust to that which we did not choose,  
to do without that which we grieve.

Help us to re-member; to rebuild; to put back together what was taken apart,  
Holding the memory and the joy near to our heart,  
Even as we open the pain and heartache to you.  
Help us to recollect that which is most important:  
That you are the God who dwells with us, come what may,  
And heals, in time, our every ill.  
May it always be so.  
Amen.