

Rev Rita Message Nov 7 2021

The first world war was supposed to have been “the war to end all wars.” The scale was enormous: 65 million soldiers were sent to fight. The casualties were horrendous: 10 million dead, 20 million wounded. For the first time new technology was used: airplanes, tanks, and submarines. But the most horrific images were from the trench warfare, where soldier faced soldier in battle. Major John McCrae called it “a time in Hades.”

In the midst of that war, while sitting on the back of an ambulance, McCrae wrote a poem. Like so many, he had just buried another dear friend. He had spent endless hours working as a doctor losing more men than saving them. At the end of his emotional rope, overwhelmed by the carnage that surrounded him, he saw poppies springing up in fields where there was only devastation. Just like those poppies in a lifeless field, he felt hope, strength, and courage spring up his soul and he was able to carry on. to continue.

“In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.”

On the 11th day of the 11 month of 1918 the Armistice signed 6 hours before took effect and, in the words of a newspaper columnist of the time: “In a twinkling, four years of killing and massacre stopped as if God had swept His omnipotent finger across the scene of world carnage and had cried “Enough”

Well, we know that “enough war” did not last. World War II followed as well as other wars and conflicts the Korean War, the Gulf War, Afghanistan.... the list goes on and on. And yet, as people of faith, we know that God’s intention for all people is a world where peace, justice, and mercy are the rule and not the exception.

In his time and place, the prophet Micah told Israel that it was all fine and good to have magnificent ceremonies but what was essential was to live a life in the manner that God desired each day and not just on special occasions. When asked about what exactly he meant, he answered that faithfulness to God required 3 things: Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with God.

Through his words and actions, Jesus taught that we were to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. In our scripture reading this morning, Jesus witnesses a great act of faithfulness when a widow offers all she has to God in the form of two coins of little value. And I believe that as people of faith we are to do likewise. We are to offer what we have no matter how small it may seem.

Some two hundred years ago, Methodist leader John Wesley encouraged people to follow 3 rules to help them grow in their faith, connect more deeply with God, and to follow Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors. Echoing the words of the prophet Micah, Wesley based his decisions and actions on 3 things. Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.

As we remember the courage of those who served their country, there is an opportunity to reflect upon what our responsibility is to work for peace today, tomorrow, and the day after that. We may never have the opportunity to bring about a peace treaty between warring factions. However, we can create peace in our lives and in the lives of others as an offering to God.

Today, tomorrow, and the day after that.... You get the idea... we can be peacemakers. We can mend a quarrel, search out a forgotten friend, dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust. Write a love letter/email/text, share some treasures, give a soft answer, and encourage youth. Keep a promise, find the time, forego a grudge, forgive an enemy. Peace happens when we simply listen, apologize if we are wrong, try to understand, flout

envy, examine our demands on others, think first of someone else. Peace is promoted when we appreciate, be kind, be gentle, laugh a little more, take up arms against malice, decry complacency, and express gratitude.

Each year, poppies bloom on shirts and jackets. When November 11th passes and we take our poppies off, I invite you to remember those who sacrificed so much for peace and then to recommit yourself to a life of peace.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.