

Reflecting on God's Word

Readings: Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (OT page 185)

Sermon

The text for the sermon is verses 6-9 "6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Today is a day where we focus on remembering all those men and women who were killed during the two World Wars and other conflicts.

But how do we usually remember?

Well, either by having a good memory, through repetition, through pictures, symbols and traditions like the Poppies everyone wears at this time, or by means of special occasions like we have today.

In the Biblical times it was no different. God wanted His people to remember that He is their ONLY God, and that they love Him unconditionally. They have been in the desert for 40 years. I think it would have been wonderful for them to hear that they are promised a new land filled with milk and honey. But in order for them to acquire the land they need to obey the Lord their God. They need to acknowledge that He is the Only God, the maker of heaven and earth. Verse 4 starts with the Hebrew word "Shema" and it became known as the "Shema" prayer which till today is prayed by every Jew entering the synagogue.

And because He is the only God, they must love Him unconditionally. The phrase *with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength* is a way of saying the whole person. The biblical idea of the *heart* covers our ideas of the will and the mind. They must truly love God, and devote their whole

lives to him. Those who love God will want to keep his commandments.

And they must carry this message forward to their children and the generations to come. They must speak to their children as often as they can about God and His will for his people. They must tie them as symbols on their hands and bind them on their foreheads. Later some Jews took this very literal by writing down this commandment of love on a small parchment roll which they put in a wee box and tied it with a leather strap around their hands and even on their foreheads preferably between the eyes. It is known as the "tephillin" or phylactery.

They must remind their children by writing on all doorframes of their houses and on all the entrance gates of all the towns that there is only ONE God. The Jews took this very literal by engraving it on every doorframe of their houses and on any entrance gate of their towns. It is still practise today to enter any room in a Jewish house and see the Hebraic inscription on the doorposts.

So every time they entered a house or a village, they remembered that God is the ONLY God the maker of heaven and earth.

And we do the same. Although we do not wear the "tephilim" between the eyes, all of us that were baptised carry the sign of baptism everywhere we go. We are reminded every time we touch our foreheads that God accepted us as His own. Every time we celebrate communion we are reminded of how much God love us – that He was prepared to go the extra mile to redeem us from sin, death and hell. Every time we experience HOLY communion we are reminded that we are included in God's eternal kingdom through faith alone. And we need to have a "remembrance service" because God brought peace, where humans failed.

We are not here because we celebrate or glorify human beings. We are not here because we love war and violence. We are here because God is in charge and He is the only one who can guarantee eternal and lasting peace. He is the only God who can stop any war, any violent situation and bring peace. But we are also remembering all the human lives caught in the wars of the past but also in the present- all those lives lost through conflict and war!

So every time you and I look at a poppy, we need to remember to learn important lessons namely:

- that whenever humans are in charge there will be poverty, war, hopelessness, decay in contrast to the everlasting kingdom of God where there always is peace, hope, love and happiness.
- not to trust humans but to trust and obey the Lord God above all.
- God is the ONLY one who knows all things.
- We must always take life seriously as a gift from God.
- War has an ugly face and some of sacrifices made, are almost inhumane.

And to conclude may we also recite the words of Deuteronomy 6 verse 4 every where we go:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה יְחִיד

Listen, Scotland the Lord our God is the ONLY God!

Why? Well if we believe in Him, we will find eternal peace, joy, love and hope – not only for this world but also for the world to come. If we cling and hold on to Him, listen to Him only - we will never have violence and war!

Amen