

## Remembrance Day

Micah 4:1-5  
Psalm 85  
Ephesians 2:13-18  
Mark 12:38-44

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November 11, 2018

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Grace and peace to you from Christ.

I'd like to start with a bit of teaching on our readings from Micah and Ephesians. So often, we lose the context of the words – where they came from, what life was like, to whom they were being spoken. The more we understand about those things, then the better able we are to absorb the word into our own lives and experience. God's word then becomes a living word.

Micah is one of the Minor Prophets of the First Testament. He lived about 2700 years ago. He wrote warnings to the people, warnings about the consequences of not following God and he wrote prophecies of promises to come. For him, God was the centre and focus of life and God was the source of peace and hope. The interesting thing is, when he was writing these words, the Israelite people were captives to another nation. Instead of writing that God would rise up and destroy, instead of saying that one day the tables would turn and Israel would be a force to be reckoned with, he wrote (to put it in a modern context): *nuclear bombs shall be dismantled down and parts sold to feed the hungry, gun lobbyists shall become day care workers, presidents and prime ministers and army generals shall build bridges, and the word "war" will be forgotten.*

So, he describes a dramatically different life than what the people were living. He dares to challenge minds and hearts to something so idealistic it may seem impossible. Footnote: Micah also prophesied the coming of Christ – so let's not get caught up on what is or is not possible for God. Overall, Micah offers words of hope for the future despite impossible circumstances.

Now, Ephesians. Here, Paul too is teaching about hope and peace. But this time the hearers are not nations in the midst of war, but the new followers of Jesus (because actually everyone was new.) The problem was a growing hostility between these new believers. Some were Jewish, some were not. Imagine! People fighting over religion! Never heard of such a thing! Paul says, *look, don't think of one another as so different, we're all flesh and blood, we're all God's people. And so if it helps, imagine one another not as people with different or competing goals and ambitions, don't think that there's not enough of God to go around for everyone, but rather think of one another as long lost cousins! Imagine that we are all now coming home in a great reunion!* What a beautiful way to dream a solution through deep conflict.

These two readings speak about peace; peace of home, heart and nation. Yet, they do not hide the reality that peace is difficult to achieve, if not impossible. We might feel hopeless left to our own efforts – because they never seem to result in a lasting peace. Perhaps, it isn't possible by human effort. And this is where Christ comes in. Where we fall short, where we are unable, where we are unwilling, Jesus is persistent. And that's because the lens by which God views us, views "success," views peace is unique. God is unwaivered by popularity, power, wealth or any other human contrived means. He is motivated only by love and by love does what is right.

Peace between nations, peace between people is an appropriate message any day, but especially today on Remembrance Day. The call to not forget, ought to continue to ring across the land, because if we dare to admit, we know that peace can crumble in a moment. Not hope though. Hope blooms inside us like a determined poppy springing forth in the very soil covering the graves of those whose lives have been taken by greed, apathy, power, abuse, violence, and of course war. We hope in the pervasive love of God, to whom we belong and in whom new life is possible. God's invitation to us is, "join me."

OK. How do we do that? How do we live and participate in this love? Lofty ideals sound great, but what can we do, how might we collaborate with God for a new humanity? It's simple really.

Go get two small coins.  
Then come to the Temple.  
Trust God.

Do you think this woman realized that she was participating in a subversive act that would facilitate God's renewal of the whole world? Because that's how Jesus describes her actions. By immersing her hope in God, giving generously, and trusting that she would be looked after today and the next, she snubs the political, economic and social systems that determined who was important, who was worthy, who we ought to listen to and watch. It is by small, almost unnoticeable actions that the world is changed. So, to us:

1. Give generously. Yes, generously.

It all belongs to God anyway, perhaps that's what the widow understood. Giving releases the grip consumerism and our own egos have on us. Giving opens our lives to care for others. Giving supports meaningful work that our governments are unable to undertake.

2. Pay attention to Christ.

Jesus is our ready and patient teacher. Read, pray, gather for worship often. These simple actions, when done regularly infuse us with the goodness of God. Our relationships and understanding strengthen and we become one body.

3. Trust God.

Yup, with our very lives. God's looking out for us and God is the one with the eternal picture. The bad news is, trust is likely the most difficult, because we'd rather look after ourselves. But the good news is, if we focus on the first two, giving and knowing Christ, trust comes naturally. So, don't sweat this one.

Simple actions, when they are aligned with God's ways of peace, justice, commitment and love have impressive impact in our own lives, in our communities and over all Creation.

Amen.