**Hear the word of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew…**

**25** “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

**2** Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

**3** The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.

**4** The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. **5** The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

**6** “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom!

 Come out to meet him!’

**7** “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.

 **8** The foolish ones said to the wise,

 ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

**9** “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ **10** “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived.

The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

**11** “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open

 the door for us!’

**12** “But he replied, **‘Truly I tell you; I don’t know you.’**

**13** “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know

 the day or the hour.

**This is the Gospel of the lord …**

***Sermon for Remembrance Sunday***

* Today we remember people – some very close to us – who have lost their lives defending their country.
* We thank God for our deliverance in the most dangerous times of our history.
* And, perhaps, we reflect on how it is - that, in a world which we believe to be governed by the rule of God, wars have become possible – and this leads us to an expression of our deepest longings for peace and safety.

**We cry, “In a world so full of hatred and violence – where,**

 **O Lord is the peace that passes all understanding?”**

The Revd. Leslie Milton in his sermon preached on this day in 2003 described the situation in the Northeast of France in the two World Wars – 1914 and 1939.

The area was overrun by the Germans who believed they were liberating a part of Germany.

The young men of the area were conscripted into the German army where they fought and died.

Nowadays, **in the rest of France**, the War Memorials read in the memory of those that died:

**“Pour la Patrie”** (For our Country)

But in Alsace they read:

**“A nos Morts”** (To our dead)

Today many countries are in armed conflict in places all around the world and, for each of them, we might ask the question,

**“Is this a just war?”**

It is interesting to read the passage from the book of Jonah –The prophet has forth-told God’s call for repentance.

* The king heeds God’s call.
* The king repents and calls the people to repent with him and turn from violence – **“Who knows”, he says, “God may relent and change his mind – He may turn from His fierce anger, so that we do not perish.”**

**I wonder if there’s a lesson for us, here?**

In a democracy, do we not all bear some responsibility for the conduct of the nation?

But all of this does not lessen, IN ANY WAY, our gratitude and deep respect for the faithfulness and courage of the men and women of our armed services.

I want to present to you today three notions – descriptions and characteristics of the people engaged in the services.

**OBEDIENCE SACRIFICE SALVATION**

Firstly OBEDIENCE.

One of the first things a new recruit learns is the nature of an ORDER and of the necessary and instant response to it.

In the heat of battle, a soldier does not debate the wisdom or correctness of an order ----

If the platoon sergeant shouts, **“DOWN”**, those who hesitate are in grave danger!!! Obedience saves lives!

We all love our heroes and so we might ask, **“Who is the most obedient person the world has ever known?”** And, as any Sunday school teacher knows, the answer is **“Jesus”.**

He was obedient unto death – even death upon the Cross – for our redemption. Not the off-chance of a bullet that might hit anyone or, perhaps, no-one -- but a slow, certain death of torture which he could have avoided.

But there are not many of us who have the courage to put ourselves in “**Harms way**” as does the soldier.

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Secondly SACRIFICE:

Jesus went to the Cross in obedience to His Father – for a reason – the redemption of mankind.

The soldiers also make sacrifices – they are called to lose control of their lives – to be taken anywhere in the world –

a real strain on families and friends.

They are called to kill as well as to die –

a frightful prospect to all of us.

But , as Christians, we, too are soldiers – soldiers of Christ. We, too are in conflict,

with **“The principalities and powers of this dark world”**

There is sacrifice when we invite Jesus Christ to be our Friend, Saviour, and Lord. We voluntarily give up the control of our lives to our Almighty, all powerful and all-loving God.

Finally, SALVATION:

We know, of course, that Jesus died on the Cross to save us from the consequence of our sinfulness –

which is ETERNAL DEATH. We are saved to ETERNAL LIFE.

But what about those in the armed forces?

Did they save us from any consequences?

And **here** we return to our own responsibilities as citizens of a free country.

**“Yes,”** we should be able to say**,**

**“They died for our freedom – our PEACE.”**

And when we put our brave men and women into

**“Harm’s way”** we need to remember that.

The question has been asked whether REMEMBRACE DAY is still relevant to our post-modern society,

and the answer to this is, I believe, contained in a poem quite recently written by a 13-year-old girl, Rebecca Sullivan, entitled **“There Lie Forgotten Men”.** She had been to an exhibition of the First World War, and she wrote this:

**She stands there alone at the edge of the silent place, and she is shocked.**

**New wars brew and these forgotten men**

**Will play no part in them.**

**The dead silence warns no ears but hers.**

**In great halls, in moments of great decision**

**What they fought for is forsaken.**

**And by day’s end new gravestones**

**Appear on the blood-red ground.**

**She finds what she seeks,**

**“Sgt John Malley age 27” His life brutally ended**

**And she stands by his grave.**

**But he can give no answers And she weeps for him. For the empty hole that he left behind**

**And for the new emptiness**

**Soon to join the black chasm.**

**And her tears join the flood.**

Lord, today we pray for a shattered world, some of us for shattered lives.

We ask our Heavenly Father, take the **false values** of our world and up-end them:

To take the **oppressed** and to free them.

To take the **leaders** and inspire them.

To take the **past** and redeem it,

the **present** and fill it,

the **future** and guide us in it.

And so:

All our laughter, all our sadness

Is safe now in God’s hands

All our anger, all our gladness

Safe now in God’s hands

All our stories, all our memories

Safe now in God’s hands

Those we remember, those we love

Safe now in God’s hands

**Amen**