

# SERMON NOTES Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2025

## sunnysidechurch

Theme: **Remembrance and Patriotism**

Passages: **John 15.9-17, Micah 4.1-5**

**Some of the main themes from the sermon**

### **Remembrance as a civic act**

This reading from John's Gospel is used on Remembrance Sunday when we remember the sacrifices of so many of our countrymen and women in the two world wars and since. Those sacrifices involved the combatants, their families and the wider web of those civilians who died and were maimed, physically and emotionally by the conflicts. We remember because, as citizens, we reap the benefits of what those two generations, in particular, suffered. And we are grateful. Remembrance Sunday is our opportunity to show that gratitude in silence and in reflection.

### **Fractures**

The context of this Remembrance Day in 2025 is a challenging one for us as British citizens and also for us as followers of Jesus. This is particularly the case because of tensions in our country, over the use of the flag of St George. What does it mean to be patriotic? How do we best honour those who died? What sort of a country do we want to be? These are live questions in our country at this time in a way they haven't been before.

### **'Love one another'**

In order to try and think this through, as citizens who are also followers of Jesus, let's begin with our Gospel reading. The scene is an upper room in Jerusalem at night. Jesus knows that he will shortly be betrayed and will go to his death. His words are charged with emotion as he tries to communicate his most dearly held truths to his closest followers. He has just washed their feet to demonstrate to them what serving one another means. Then, having comforted them he tries to explain to them how life will unfold for them up to and beyond his own death. He talks of the Holy Spirit fulfilling his presence, he prays his peace on them. He tells them that if they stay close to him, like branches on a vine, they will be fruitful. And then he tells them the simple practical way for them to make this happen. They are to love one another. This is so important that Jesus repeats it in v12 and then in v17.

### **'Greater love has no one than this ...'**

Having shown them that love involves humble, undignified service by washing their feet, Jesus tells his friends in v13 that there is a greater love, that of 'laying

down one's life for one's friends'. He says this knowing what his disciples cannot, that within the day he will do just that.

### **Remembrance as part of our Christian life**

Squaring our response to remembrance as citizens and that as followers of Jesus is not straightforward. Our gratitude is real but we are also acutely aware of the suffering on all sides in any military conflict. We are also aware of how we and all people fall short of Jesus' command to love each other. This fact is at the heart of almost all conflict on whatever scale. I suggest that the best way to truly honour the sacrifice of those who died is to work towards peace and justice, in our neighbourhood, in our country and in our world. And that is quite a challenge.

### **A prophetic voice**

I wonder if we are being called to be like the prophet, Micah. He saw his country with God's eyes and spoke God's truth to his country. Our bible reading from Micah, expresses God's desire that people should live in peace, without fear. In the preceding chapters, Micah had castigated his own leaders and those of the neighbouring countries for turning away from God's ways.

### **Modern Christian Martyrs**

Alexei Navalny and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were both spiritual descendants of Micah. They were Christians whose faith made them speak out. Interestingly it brought them brought them into conflict with their own country's leaders. In each case they died because their allegiance to God came first. We are deeply blessed because we live in an open democratic country, where dissent is accepted. Even so our love of country can never be absolute and unthinking.

### **Salt and Light**

We are called to be Jesus, disciples first and foremost, salt and light in our communities. We are called to see our country with God's eyes and speak God's truth in difficult times, as Micah, Navalny and Bonhoeffer did.

### ***Some questions for thought and discussion this week:***

- 1. What about our country do you really love? Make a list. Which of these are the things that were imperilled in the conflicts that cost the lives of those who served in the two world wars?*
- 2. Is there a difference between patriotism and nationalism?*
- 3. Which groups of people do you find it easiest to love, and which do you find hardest? Can you explore why you react differently to the two groups?*
- 4. What does it mean to love each other as Jesus loved us (John 15.12)?*
- 5. What does it mean to love our enemies (Matt 5.44)? Is this possible? Has anyone ever truly loved their enemies?*