

# WEEKLY SERMON

[communicate@blackburn.anglican.org](mailto:communicate@blackburn.anglican.org)



## Lest We Forget

*'God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle line,  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!'*

*Rudyard Kipling, 1897*

It is Remembrance Sunday this weekend and we are encouraged to stop and remember. Our focus is often on the two world wars, but there have also been conflicts since where people we may know have seen service. Afghanistan is at the fore of our minds because it is still in the news, but Iraq and Bosnia linger in recent years.

Remembering means different things to different people. Growing up I would visit my grandmother and there was a picture of my grandfather, resplendent in his RAF uniform, hanging on the living room wall just by the kitchen door. My grandmother would tell stories of the war, as a newly-married woman left on her own with a very young child, evacuated from her home to live far away. There were a few tales of what my grandfather had been and what he had done, and there was pride that he had served his country.

On the other side of my family, my other grandfather had served with the Army and I know even less of this period of his life. He enlisted in a group with his friends and I know only he and one other returned from the front lines. Although physically uninjured, they were not unaffected. There was no uniformed photograph hanging in their house. The war was rarely talked about. There wasn't any less pride, but there was great deal more grief, sadness and quite a bit of anger.

Wars and armed conflicts are horrific. When people go off to war, we ask them to be prepared not just to sacrifice their own life, but also to be willing to take the life of another human being. The horrors of what they will witness and what they are called to do are almost unimaginable. They will take a heavy toll on them. We can understand the bravery involved but it is likely we will never fully comprehend what it takes unless we have been there.

Lest we forget, was not a poem originally written about war, but it had a solemn tone that fitted the national mood at the end of the First World War. It encouraged the readers to understand that nothing lasts forever except God alone and without God nothing would be successful. This prayer-like poem calls God to be with us ... lest we forget.

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This year, we stop and call to mind those who have served in wars and conflicts past: we honour their service and salute their bravery, we cherish the memories of those who died, we think of the darkness of those times, we pledge ourselves to work for peace in the future, and we ask the Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet.  
Lest we forget - lest we forget!

**Rev. Calum Crombie**  
**Managing Chaplain for HMP Wymott**