



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Remembrance Sunday 2018

St Marylebone Parish Church 10.50 am

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It was called the ‘Great War’ and the ‘War to end all Wars’ and today on this day of national remembrance with people across the Commonwealth - and beyond - we have gathered to commemorate the centenary of the Armistice.

Signed in a railway carriage deep in the forest of Compiègne, the armistice was designed to bring to an end to the hostilities which had raged on land, on sea and in the air.

But, the signing of the Armistice, did not bring the War to an abrupt or final end at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918.

Three bitter postponements meant that the armistice was not actually ratified until 10th January 1920 and, in many ways, a hundred and four years after the chaos and devastation which began on July 28, 1914, the ‘War to end all Wars’ is still not over.

As soon as the last guns fell silent in the stagnant trenches of Flanders, in the cordite-filled air above them and on the oceans of the Atlantic and the North Sea, the war continued to be fought out - in the Russian Revolution, the collapse of the German Empire, the fall of the Hapsburg Monarchy, the catastrophic division and irrational parcelling out of the Middle East and in the second great war which was to engulf not only Europe by Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

Lord Grey's assertion made on the 3rd August 1914 that "the lamps" were "going out all over Europe" and that they would not be "lit again" in the "life-time[s]" of those would witness the ensuing carnage was profoundly prophetic, but it also woefully underestimated the time frame in which the war's aftermath would be felt and the theatres in which its effects would be felt.

As Christians, we can set all of this in the context of another story of bloodshed and sacrifice, of apparent endings and new beginnings: a story which continues to provide meaning and hope, purpose and shape not only to that which is past and to that which now is, but also to that which is still to come.

All of our worship here in this great parish church has, since 1883, been offered before John Crompton's great mosaic of the Crucifixion: a senseless and brutal act of violence, designed to extinguish not just a life but a developing movement which sought to reorder the world; a movement designed to transcend time and place in order to bring the life of God's Kingdom to the kingdoms of the world.

Bruised, pierced and crowned with thorns Jesus last words, as he hanged upon the cross, were “It is finished!”ⁱ but this was no “interregnum in hostilities”ⁱⁱ, no finger pressed temporarily on the ‘Pause Button’, but the final ending all endings in the cosmic battle which birthed the final new beginning; in which and through which, the fullness of God’s glory was not only most perfectly revealed, but which, through the water and blood which poured from Jesus’ pierced side, gave birth to a *new* creation, a *new* world order in which death now has to give way to life, in which darkness has now to give way to light, and in which division and hatred has now to yield reconciliation and love.

Christ’s once-for-all death on the cross leads to the new life of Easter and is God’s eternal invitation to *everyone, everywhere* to live the life of this new creation and to participate in building God’s Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

ⁱ John 19:30

ⁱⁱ The *Daily Telegraph*, Editorial, Saturday 10th November 2018