

Sermon
8 November 201
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Text: John 15:9-17

Remembrance Sunday

It is November. The time of year when the trees shed their leaves. The time of year when we remember.

Just as year after year, the leaves fall from the trees, and in their thousands lie on the ground to be trampled on and eventually disappear; just like that, war after war, conflict after conflict, soldiers fall...and die...

- During World War 1, in *nature* the seasons were changing as they normally do, but in the *lives* of all those involved, the leaves were falling down from the trees all the time (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*), soldiers fell and died, and the souls of their loved ones were trampled on by the enemy...
- During the conflicts that followed, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fall from the trees (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*).
- During World War 2, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fall from the trees (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*), and the souls of their loved ones were trampled on by the enemy.
- During the conflicts that followed, soldiers fell like autumn leaves fall from the trees (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*).

- In different parts of the world today, soldiers are falling like autumn leaves fall from the trees (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*), even civilians are falling like autumn leaves fall from the trees (*drop dried leaves from the pulpit*)...

Bullets and bombs are stripping people's lives bare; are ripping families apart; are robbing people of a safe place to live.

Autumn after autumn we see the same thing happen in nature – a beautiful, majestic landscape of warm, bright colours transforming into something bare and brown. It's very predictable, we know what autumn brings.

You would think that after all these years people would learn what the outcome of conflict and war is too... But over and over and over again violence and hatred and misunderstandings make winter start in people's lives, sometimes a winter that never ends.

Remembrance Day is there to prevent us from just raking all the leaves together, discarding and forgetting about them, because those who have fallen went to fight for what they believed in, for places and people they loved. So we need to remember them. We shouldn't ever allow the cold winter wind to blow our memories of them away forever.

Maybe we should take a leaf out of Jesus' book. In John 15:12 & 13 he said: "Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Just like so many soldiers, Jesus gave his life for his friends. And he did that so that *when we die*, we won't be forgotten – we will be transformed to live with God eternally.

We don't need to *die* to give our lives for others, we can *live* to give our lives for others, by loving them in the same way Jesus did.

Friend and enemy alike.

So let us strive to live in peace and harmony with our families, neighbours, friends and enemies, and pray that this attitude will spread all over the world, so that we wouldn't ever have to add the names of *our* sons and daughters to the lists read out on Remembrance Day.

Let's remember all the fallen soldiers we know and those we only know about today, but let's also remember that God has given us the ability to choose. Let's, like Jesus, choose love over hate and peace over war.

Amen