

Sermon
12 November 2017
West Kirk of Calder

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Text: 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Remembrance Sunday

Broken.

Broken bones, broken hearts, broken lives.

The devastating result of war.

Freedom, democracy and peace came at a price, a very high price.

And today we are gathered here to remember that. To remember and pay our respects to all those whose lives were broken, so that OUR lives can be whole...

In our reading this morning the Apostle Paul compared life on earth with jars of clay.

In Biblical times jars of clay – similar to this one (*show clay jar*) – were widely used, because clay was readily available. In a society where people hardly ever threw anything anyway, these jars were so cheap,

and easy to get hold of, that if they broke they were usually just disposed of.

Because these jars were so easily available, people used them for many different purposes, often even to store their treasures in – like jewellery or manuscripts.

It is no wonder that archaeologists to this day often find ancient manuscripts hidden in clay jars, some still in good condition.

Generally speaking, the clay jars were quite durable. Over time cracks would form in them, but they would usually last for a very long time before they broke.

Now the apostle Paul is making the valid point that as believers we are like clay jars – finite and breakable – but we have a treasure inside us – our faith – that will stay intact, even when the vessel it is carried in fades away.

Although we are vulnerable and exposed to daily damage, which can cause cracks in our outer shell – the valuable treasure that we carry inside – our faith in the redemption and resurrection of Jesus Christ – cannot be crushed or broken.

The Apostle Pauls' conclusion about all this is whenever we are persecuted, we should rejoice, because in our suffering we share in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we should never lose heart.

Paul concludes this passage by saying: “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day by God’s Holy Spirit. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”



That is the normal path life is supposed to take: like a beautiful and functional new clay jar that develops wee cracks over time and eventually at some point breaks; - we are born, we grow up, we grow older, and then one day we die.

But that is not what happened during World Wars 1 and 2, that’s not what happens during any war...

Ordinary men, and later also women – some just barely old enough to fight – went to the battlefields hoping for the best – hoping to be able to make a difference and then return to their loved ones.

They went to the war full of hope for a better future, but then they were faced by a devastating, shocking reality, namely that fighting for freedom ends up in brokenness...

Long before it was time for their clay jars to even crack, they were crushed (*break clay jar*) – broken to pieces...

And today we have a choice... Do we pick up these pieces while remembering them and their suffering? Remembering how they

protected our freedom? Remembering that they made sure that we have a just society where all are equal?

Or do we discard of these pieces, to soon forget that they were even there in the first place?

NO! We need to gather the pieces to remind us of the sacrifice so many people made for us in the line of duty, and by doing this, try our best to strive for a society where all can be free; where justice, love and peace prevail.

So many lives have been broken, and are still broken today by violence and wars. We are united with these people in the faith that we share in our resurrected Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ .

We have a treasure inside our brokenness just like they had.

We belong to God and *nothing* is more important than that. Not even life itself.

No-one can ever take the HOPE that we share in the everlasting life away from us.

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And if maybe *today* you find yourself in a state of conflict, if an inner-war is making your life hard, remember the words of Paul:
The power to handle the hard side of life comes from God and not ourselves.

Even when we are *hard pressed on every side, we are not crushed; when we are perplexed, we are not in despair; when we are persecuted, we are not abandoned; when we are struck down, we are not destroyed!*

Why? Because of the faith we carry inside us.

So let's pick up the pieces – and never forget that they were broken for us. And let's treasure the fact that because Jesus' body was broken for us too, broken bodies can become whole again, and stay intact forever, in the kingdom of God.

Amen