

Remembrance Sermon 2025. Who is my Neighbour?

Thank you for coming and being part of this service. It's great to see you all here as we join people up and down the land on this Remembrance Sunday.

When the Last Post sounds and the silence begins I will think of Joe, who was in my church youth group some years ago. He wasn't sure what to do with his life but had enjoyed being an army cadet and won a place at Sandhurst. But first he volunteered to serve in Afghanistan as a reservist. Within a few weeks he was dead, blown up while out on patrol. He had just turned 20 years old. So I remember Joe today, his mother and his sister, as no doubt you remember any you know who suffered or died in war. *At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.*

When Joe died I prayed that his soul might find a lasting home in heaven. In today's bible reading a man asked Jesus how he can inherit eternal life. The answer is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and secondly, to love our neighbour as our self.

'And who is my neighbour?' the man asks Jesus, who then tells the story of the Good Samaritan. A man gets beaten up and robbed in the street. A priest comes along but passes him by. A well to do person does the same thing, leaving the man half dead.

Finally, a Samaritan comes along. They were despised in those days, foreigners, outsiders, people 'not like us'... But this Samaritan is moved to pity. He stops, he cares for the injured man, and brings him somewhere where he can recover in safety. This is what a true neighbour looks like says Jesus. Go and do likewise.

Think for a moment. If you'd been attacked, if you were shocked and in pain, would you mind who came and cared for you? Would you worry what colour they were, or how they'd come to be there? Like people in Jesus' day, we can all have bias and prejudice inside us. But when the chips are down, I know I would welcome help from any kind human being. When our need is acute, we can sometimes see more clearly. That we are all one. All human beings. Capable of being enemies, but also of being there for one another, Good Samaritans in times of need.

I'm proud of being British, proud of being English too. Proud of the Christian values that have built this land, of love, compassion, justice and freedom. Where we know all people to be made in the image of God regardless of creed or colour. Joe thought he was working for a better world in Afghanistan, where women and girls, where all could be free. Many Afghans also served alongside our soldiers. They and their families faced death once the Taliban took over. Some have been able to find safety in the UK and have been so grateful.

One such family were happily settled in our area until one night they received a knock on their door. Filmed on Facebook they were labelled incorrectly as Asylum Seekers. That night a crowd wearing flags surrounded their house, shouting for them to leave. It must have been so frightening for them, after all they'd been through already. In the end they were removed for their own safety.

After giving up everything to support our troops, how will that family be feeling this Remembrance Sunday? What will all this ceremony mean to them when they have faced such hatred? Is this the best our country can offer? Is this the nation we want to be?

Brothers and sisters in church today, we can do better than this! We can be a country fit for heroes to live in, a land of safety, compassion, justice and freedom. We'll need courage and determination to build that better Britain and we'll need to stop blaming others and look to ourselves to start making a difference. As I remember Joe and all the fallen, I will pray that together we will become the people God wants us to be and learn how to be good neighbours once again.