



Call to Worship – Revelation 22: 17 and 20

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Hymn – Be still my soul

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVLEzpB-Pac>

Be still my soul the Lord is on your side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain.
Leave to your God, to order and provide,
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still my soul, your saviour and your friend,
will lead you safe until a joyful end.

Be still my soul, your God will undertake,
to guide the future as he has the past.
Your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake,

all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still my soul, the wind and waves will know,
His voice who ruled, while he was here below.

Be still my soul the hour is hastening on
when we shall be forever with the Lord.
When disappointment grief and fear are gone,
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still my soul, when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed, we shall meet at last.

Kathrina von Schlegel (translated by Jane Borthwick)

Prayers

Be still my soul the Lord is on your side. Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain.

Lord God, we thank you for your eternal presence with us. You are our light, our peace, our healing. You are our God, glorious beyond anything we could ever imagine. As we worship you today it may be in ease or stress; joy or sorrow. Whatever we may be going through, help us to be still before you and know that with you by our side there is nothing we cannot endure. We thank you that you do not stand distantly removed from your creation but through your Spirit you are here in our midst and through your Son we can enjoy your presence without guilt or fear because we are reconciled to you.

Be still my soul, your God will undertake, to guide the future as he has the past.

All-knowing and all-powerful God, we look to you for our leading and guidance. On this Remembrance Sunday we remember the horror and suffering of war. We seek peace yet are forced to confess that, try as we might to change, our world is still full of conflict. We cannot fix this planet on our own. We cannot even fix ourselves. We thank you that you do not stand removed from your creation but through your Spirit you speak to those who have ears to hear and through your Son you have dealt with sin and with all that would keep us from you.

Be still my soul the hour is hastening on when we shall be forever with the Lord.

On this Remembrance Sunday we look to the eleventh hour when fighting came to an end; when peace was restored and when finally people could finally go home. We thank you that your word speaks of another hour when the trumpet will sound, when the dead shall rise and when we shall finally enter into our eternal home. We thank you that you do not stand removed from your creation but, through your Spirit, you have given us a deposit guaranteeing all that is to come and, through your Son, you have destroyed the power of death and opened the gates of Heaven to all who trust in him. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn – STF 132 – O God our help in ages past

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssr-Ga3Mz6Q>

O God, our Help in ages past,
our Hope for years to come,
our Shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal Home.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is Thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream
bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the op'ning day.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting Thou art God,
to endless years the same.

O God, our Help in ages past,
our Hope for years to come,
be Thou our Guard while life shall last,
and our eternal Home!

Isaac Watts

Readings Isaiah 25:1-9, John 14 v. 1-6, Revelation 21 v. 1-5

Sermon

I'm writing these words against the backdrop of Storm Ciarin and the devastation it has left in its wake.

I'm also writing for Remembrance Sunday when we are reminded of the horrors of war and the devastation it too leaves in its wake, albeit of a different degree. We remember the past in order that we might learn from it and thus do all we can to work for peace in our present and in our future.

I was reminded of the devastating consequences of war when, in 2005, I moved as a minister to Tunbridge Wells. There I met an amazing lady called Edie. One measure of Edie's amazingness was that she was still doing a good job of being the Circuit's property secretary when she was in her early nineties. Take ninety years away from 2005 when I first met Edie and you'll come back to 1915 when she was just a toddler. That was the last time she saw her father.

He had enlisted with countless others from the local area who formed a local regiment and this regiment was sent out to take part in the Gallipoli campaign. Edie's father never even made it that far. On the night of the 28th October 1915, their boat, a converted cross channel ferry renamed HMS Hythe was off the Turkish coast. Their lights were extinguished so as not to attract attention from enemy guns. Unfortunately, that made it difficult for anyone to see them, friend or foe, and they were rammed by another troopship that was speeding away having just disembarked the soldiers it was carrying. The Hythe sank inside ten minutes and more than half of the troops it was carrying were drowned.

One story handed down is that in a local road the postman was so overcome by the sheer number of bad news messages he had to deliver that he had to abandon his round and return to the depot.

The casualties of war stretch far beyond those killed in action. There are the partners or parents who receive those messages of bad news. There are the children who will grow up without a father and maybe, like Edie, without even a clear memory of what their father was like. And there are those pledged to be married who will never make it to the altar.

On this mountain he will destroy, the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces ...

How we long for that time, described by the prophet Isaiah, when God will destroy the pain of death forever and wipe away the tears from every face. It's a vision taken up again at the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation. And there it's pictured in the language of marriage and separation. John sees the beginning of the wedding of Jesus with his bride, the church. Death has not been able to stop it. Nothing will be able to stop it.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

This is what Jesus promised in our Gospel reading. Back in Jesus’ time, the timeline for getting married looked something like this. The groom and his father would visit the home of the potential bride to seek an agreement from her family. When that deal was struck, the couple would become betrothed and the groom would return to his family home where he would build on to the house some additional living space that would become theirs after the couple got married. Several months later - and with no contact in between - he would return (often without warning – note the parable of the ten bridesmaids!) to take her to the wedding celebrations at her new home.

With that in mind, listen again to what Jesus says to his disciples and to us. He is using the language of marriage. I am going away. I am going to my Father’s house. I am going to prepare a place for you. But I will return and I will take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am. These are exactly the words that you might expect a bridegroom to say to his betrothed back in Jesus’ day as they said goodbye after their betrothal.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Now in Revelation we see the glorious fulfilment of those words. Jesus has returned and brought us to his Father’s house. The bride is prepared and ready for the wedding celebrations to begin. From now on, united with Jesus, we shall dwell with God in his house forever. Where God will wipe every tear from every eye. Where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

As we keep silence, we look back and we remember. We remember those whose lives were ended by war and those whose lives were never the same again. We remember in order that our lives might be committed to all that works for peace in our time. But we also look forward, to that glorious time when all things are made new and death and war, pain and suffering are swallowed up by God.

Please use the following video to silently reflect <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDL19G9Hcec>

Hymn – One Day (When we all get to Heaven)

Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8OKGP6kl_8

One day You'll make everything new, Jesus
One day You will bind every wound
The former things shall all pass away
No more tears
One day You'll make sense of it all, Jesus
One day every question resolved
Every anxious thought left behind
No more fear

Chorus:

When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus

We'll sing and shout the victory

One day we will see face to face, Jesus
Is there a greater vision of grace
And in a moment, we shall be changed
On that day
And one day we'll be free, free indeed, Jesus
One day all this struggle will cease
And we will see Your glory revealed
On that day

Songwriters: Beth Redman / Leonard Jarman / Matt Redman
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Universal Music Publishing Group

Prayers of Intercession

(Adapted from prayers produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland)

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace:

for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God; **May God give peace**

for those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss; **May God give peace**

for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return; **May God give peace**

for civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity; **May God give peace**

for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; **May God give peace**

for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace. **May God give peace**

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.

As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service. Let us strive for all that makes for peace. Let us seek to heal the wounds of war. Let us work for a just future for all humanity.

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us that have not yet been cast out by love: May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people, And live lives of justice, courage and mercy; through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 706 – Longing for Light

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt3Qc04ulOM>

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Chorus:

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.
Chorus

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
Chorus

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
Chorus

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.
Chorus