

Bach's Sleepers Awake <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuoVUrQwqxA>

Call to Worship Micah 4:1-4

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;
that God may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.
The Lord shall judge between the peoples and arbitrate between the nations,
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks,
nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more...
Let us walk in the name of the Lord our God forever.

Hymn O God, Our Help in Ages Past R&S 705

Opening prayer

We meet in the presence of God.
We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith
for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may together
live in freedom, justice and peace.
We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain
continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.
We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives,
in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away. **Amen**

Bible readings: **Psalm 16**
 Mark 13:1-8

Today's gospel reading tells us that there will be wars and nation rising against nation.
Today we remember those who have died in wars, especially the Second and First World
War, which was supposed to be the 'war to end all wars' – of course, we know that it wasn't.
At this moment around the globe there are around 40 ongoing wars or conflicts; in particular
the war in Israel Gaza which is filling the news bulletins with horrific images of suffering,
mainly of civilians not combatants.

Mark 13:3-37, (we only read to verse 8) is sometimes called the "Little Apocalypse,"
because it describes wars, earthquakes, famines, and nations rising against each other.
While it is hard to determine if Mark 13 anticipates the Jewish-Roman War (66-70 CE) or
responds to it, these warnings on Jesus' lips anticipate challenges faced by the Jewish
community in Palestine with the war and destruction of the Temple. It is easy to imagine
that those events felt like the end of the world for those who watched them. Jews still mourn
the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and pray at the Western Wall – all that remains
of it. As far as we know, the gospel of Mark was written around the time of this war which
ended 70 years after Jesus' death, so Jesus himself could not have been speaking about
that specific war, rather Mark uses the words of Jesus to explore the times he was living in.
Much as we try to relate the Bible and the words of Jesus to the times we live in. While

Jesus may not have lived through that particular conflict, he did live through an oppressive Roman regime and was killed by it – he knew about violence, conflict and oppression.

The events Mark's Gospel has Jesus describe are merely the "beginning of the birth pangs". With the lack of clarity on timeline of these events, it makes sense that Jesus would warn the disciples not to be led astray by those who would claim to come in his name. It is tempting to cling to anything that promises a foothold at times when we feel everything is out of control. When we are surrounded by news of horrific events outside our control, not only war but the effects of climate change, affecting people across the world and in the UK, and often leading directly or indirectly to conflict over scarce resources.

While our context is radically different from first-century Palestine, our own world has changed rapidly in recent years - increasing wealth disparity, climate change reaching a critical point, the death of the only monarch most of us have known, the COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging details of how badly the government handled that. It is increasingly hard to find any kind of foothold or comfort for how to respond to all these things - what to do, and what will save us. COVID-19 may feel like a distant memory now to some, but it is still with us, and the way humans abuse nature is likely to lead to more future pandemics and new diseases. Pandemics and wars show us the fragility of life and the world, causing anxiety that the world is ending. They cause us to think about the meaning of life, the universe and everything. These crises inspire big questions of who we are and how we are in the world; and they inspire big questions about in whom we believe and the shape that belief takes in every day life.

Today's reading starts with the disciples looking up at the Temple, inviting us to marvel with them at its beauty. We then have the shock of Jesus saying, "You see these large buildings? Not one stone will be upon another that will not be cast down." We could look at pictures of Gaza, or other war zones, and hear the words of Jesus today. Peter, James, and John asked Jesus privately about when this would happen, but instead of telling them, Jesus tells the disciples to look out for those claiming to come in his name. To not be led astray by false prophets and messiahs, and to not be alarmed if they hear about wars or rumours of wars. The 'Little Apocalypse' ends at verse 37 with Jesus urging them to be watchful, keep alert, because they do not know when the Messiah will come. – "What I say to you I say to all: Keep awake." Which is why we listened to Bach's 'Sleepers Awake' before worship. Jesus tells the disciples that wars, earthquakes, famines, and struggles are not the culmination of the things to come. The coming of the Son of Man is the culmination. In the midst of uncertainty, threat, and disaster, the end, outcome, or culmination, is the Messiah – Jesus himself.

Mark 13 reminds us to not be led astray by false prophets, or fake news, or literal interpretations of scripture that cannot help us in our very challenging times; rather, we are to look for Jesus. Don't marvel at the fancy buildings around you, rather listen to Jesus who is right in your midst, guiding and teaching you. Just like the poor will always be with us, so, sadly, will wars and conflicts. Let them not detract from the fact that God is constant and God's love for us is unchanging. The God that came to live as a mortal among us, to suffer alongside us, a fact we will celebrate in a few short weeks at Christmas. The coming of the Messiah is the final word, not wars, famines and earthquakes, however hard it might be to hold onto that belief.

Hymn For the healing of the nations R&S 620

Prayers of intercession

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. **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. **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;
and praying especially today for the people of Gaza and Israel
and all those living through the wars now forgotten by the media in Ukraine, Yemen and Sudan
May God give peace. **God give peace**

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

Lord's Prayer

Silence by Malcolm Guite IF TIME

November pierces with its bleak remembrance
Of all the bitterness and waste of war.
Our silence tries but fails to make a semblance
Of that lost peace they thought worth fighting for.
Our silence seethes instead with wraiths and whispers,
And all the restless rumour of new wars,

Bridgwater Drive Church, Remembrance Sunday, 12 November 2023.

The shells are falling all around our vespers,
No moment is unscarred, there is no pause,
In every instant bloodied innocence
Falls to the weary earth and whilst we stand
Quiescence ends again in acquiescence,
And Abel's blood still cries in every land
One silence only might redeem that blood
Only the silence of a dying God.

Act of Remembrance (please stand)

Let us recall before God
those who have given their lives in the cause of freedom
and in the service of others especially those known to us.
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
we will remember them.

We will remember them.

Two minute silence

We will remember them.

We will remember them.

Ever-living God we remember those whom you have
gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence;
may that same peace calm our fears,
bring justice to all peoples and establish harmony among the nations,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn Put peace into each other's hands R&S 635

LORD'S SUPPER

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.
The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.
You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.
You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations,
and the gathered wisdom of many years.
You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up
in difficult times where there was little peace.

He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.
He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.
For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.
You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,
to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.
For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people
on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.
This is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ proclaimed the kingdom
and restored the broken to wholeness of life:
look with compassion on the anguish of the world,
and by your healing power make whole both people and nations;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn Make Me a Channel of your Peace R&S 629

Blessing

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people
so that we will work for justice, equity and peace.
May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from
pain, rejection, starvation and war
so that we will reach out to comfort them and change their pain to joy.
And may God bless us with the foolishness to think that
we can make a difference in the world
so that we will do things which others tell us cannot be done. Amen

The Bridgwater Drive Church sung Blessing.