

Remembrance Sunday 2018 (Civic Service)

John 15: 12 – 17

Each year communities like Bridlington gather across the nation, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh month, to remember those who have died in armed conflicts during the twentieth century and – all too tragically – during this century also. This year is no exception. We honour the memory of those who have laid down their lives in conflicts right up to the intractable aftermath of war in Iraq and Afghanistan; and we pay tribute to them.

As we gather to do this in 2018 our particular focus is all those – perhaps as many as 20 million across the world – who died in the First World War. Because, as I expect everybody here knows, today is the 100th Armistice Day: the 100th eleventh hour of the eleventh month since the Armistice that led to the end of the First World War. At this precise moment 100 years ago those who had survived could say for the first time

after enduring four years of living hell: “The Battle is over: thank God.”

In preparation for today Bridlington has been immeasurably assisted by local historians, Chris Bonnett and Mike Wilson. They have meticulously researched and published details of all the 390 Bridlington men who died in that war. Their names are now all recorded for the first time on the memorial around which we gather. This evening, at 6.00pm at the Priory Church, there will be a roll call, to which everybody is invited, of all 390 of those names. And then, co-ordinated with communities all across the country, a beacon will be lit and the church bells will ring out, once again to proclaim “The Battle is over.”

It has been possible to go on a trail around the Old Town to see where some of those 390 lived before they went off to war. There’s a laminated sheet at each property to say who lived there, where and when they died and where they were buried. In my front window

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

I have a sheet recording the deaths of a father and a son from the same household: the poor woman who lived there lost both her husband and her son. Another address records the deaths of three brothers. Such incidences of unimaginable grief are not unique, but were replicated across Bridlington and up and down the country.

It is to enter into that grief – even though we are removed from it by 100 years - and to count the cost of war that we have gathered today, as we have in the years gone by and as we shall in the years to come, to honour our pledge to them, and to all who have followed, that we will remember them. We remember the horrors they endured; we remember the grief it inflicted; and we reflect that we have failed to avoid sending generation after generation of others after them.

Jesus said we should love one another. But we have found it impossible. It seems living in love and peace

with one another is beyond human capability. But that need not be a limitation: it can be an invitation, an invitation to do precisely that: to live beyond human capability.

In the terms of the Christian faith it is an invitation to live through the life that Jesus laid down for us and in the power of his Spirit, in order to anticipate and to expect things we can't achieve in our own strength. And to people of all faiths and of none it is an invitation to do what is true, to do what is honourable, to do what is just, to do what is pure; and by so doing to create a lasting memorial for those to whose courage and sacrifice we rightly pay tribute today.

Amen.