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ORDINARY 32A

8th November 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

As you look up and look out from where you are reading this, what do you see?

Take a moment now to look around, and look for signs of goodness, signs of hope, signs of love. Perhaps a tree or plant that somebody planted once, perhaps a gift or card from someone you know, perhaps a piece of art or craft given to you, or two strangers greeting each other through the window.

Take some time to notice these glimpses of hope, these signs of goodness. If one in particular draws your attention, you may wish to use that as a prompt for prayer.

When you are ready, say these words, you may wish to read them aloud if appropriate:

Ordinary, everyday God,

Thank you that you make yourself known to us in the small actions of each day.

Thank you that we can receive your grace, your love without the need for grand gestures, and that we don't have to earn a place in your Kingdom, but receive that as gift.

Thank you for the glimpses of your glory that I can see around me today. Help me to continue to notice those in the days and weeks to come.

And may I maintain a grateful heart, O God.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 25: 1-13 – Click for reading

Responding to the reading

At first look, today's gospel reading from Matthew 25 is a strange story for Remembrance Sunday: Ten bridesmaids wait for a bridegroom, five bring enough oil for their lamps and five do not. The bridegroom is delayed, everyone becomes tired and falls asleep. Then, in the middle of the night, he returns and the lamps are lit. Some are ready, some are not, and the story ends with the unsettling words: keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

It is in this last line that we can see a link back to Remembrance Sunday, because this day asks us to do something very important: to remember. We remember people whose lives were lost in war, those who served and those who suffered. Today, we remember families separated, homes destroyed and communities devastated, and we remember that the consequences of violence don't end when the fighting stops.

So today, we remember, but perhaps this parable asks us to go one step further: what are we going to do with what we remember? Remembering can become a passive thing, a 'going through the motions' that we tick off each year when we stand quietly and wear a poppy (or not, as per our personal choices). We can observe the silence, and then we can go home and carry on exactly as before.

Perhaps Christian remembrance is meant to be more demanding than that, and more about ‘keeping the lamp lit.’

The lamp is a small thing, it doesn't illuminate the whole world, nor does it prevent the darkness from existing, but it provides enough light to take the next step. Is that what you are called to do this November? Not to solve every conflict in the world, nor to imagine that we can eliminate every cause of violence, but to keep alive the light of peace, compassion, justice and hope. This month, and beyond, can you refuse to allow hatred to become normal, or to allow another human being to become simply an enemy, a statistic or a problem.

There is something uncomfortable about the gospel story, too. The five wise bridesmaids cannot simply hand over their oil to the others, there is a limit to what can be shared at the last moment. Perhaps that reminds us that some things cannot be left until the crisis arrives:

- peace cannot be built only when war has already begun,
- justice cannot be postponed until people are already suffering,
- reconciliation cannot wait until hatred has hardened.

If we want a more peaceful world, we have to prepare for it now, make it a reality now. We have to build the relationships, challenge the prejudices and address the inequalities that make violence more likely. The work of peace begins long before the moment when we desperately need it.

That is what gives Remembrance Sunday a deeper purpose. We are not simply remembering the past, we are allowing the past to speak to the present. We remember so that we might notice the warning signs. We remember so that we might recognise the humanity of those we are tempted to dehumanise. We remember so that we might become people who choose dialogue before division, compassion before contempt and peace before violence.

The question is not simply: ‘Do I remember?’ Rather, it is: ‘What does my remembering ask of me?’ Or ‘how do I practice peace today?’

Every small act of reconciliation is, in its own way, a tiny lamp against the darkness, and so perhaps today we can hold together two things: grief and hope.

We grieve for what has been lost, but we do not grieve as those without hope. In fact, we live an active hope for a world in which fewer lives are lost to violence. We acknowledge the darkness, and we choose to keep the lamps lit.

The final words of the passage are about staying awake. Perhaps that is the challenge for us: not simply to be awake at the right moment, but to be awake to what is happening around us. To be awake to the injustice, the suffering, the language that divides people into ‘us’ and ‘them,’ and awake to the possibility of peace.

Today we remember. Tomorrow, we live differently because we remember.

Some questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Who are the people and communities whose suffering I need to remember?
2. What lessons from the past must we refuse to forget?
3. Where might I be called to be a peacemaker in my own life?
4. What would it mean for my remembrance to become action?

May we remember with honesty. May we grieve with compassion. May we honour those who have died without romanticising the violence that took their lives. May we keep awake

to the suffering of people caught up in conflict today. And may we keep our lamps lit, our small lights of peace, justice, mercy and hope, until the darkness gives way to something better.

Hymn/Song:
463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past – YouTube

Blessing

Go from this space and time, with the divine love of the Christ in your heart,
With the inspiring hope of the Spirit in your midst,
And the Creator God surrounding you with grace that knows no end.
Go in peace, and serve the Lord,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 9th November

- God of light, shine gently into the hidden places of my life.
- Where I need healing, bring healing.
- Where I need courage, bring courage.
- Where I need to change, bring grace. Amen.

Tuesday 10th November

- Why not find a time to be still for 10 minutes today, or longer if you can manage it? Just allow the silence to wash over you and use the space to notice what thoughts come to mind.
- Pray about your internal monologue, offering it over to God.
- If it helps, repeat this simple mantra from the Psalms: Be still, and know that I am God.

Wednesday 11th November

- Today is marked in some Lutheran traditions as the feast day of Soreen Kierkegaard, the Christian philosopher who continues to inspire and challenge our thinking today.
- If it is an option for you, you could look Kierkegaard up online, at your local library, or perhaps you know someone who might have a book about him, his thought and his life. If you can't do that today, why not make a commitment to do so when you next have the chance?
- Loving God, we thank you that as we worship you today, we are part of a great cloud of witnesses of people who have gone before, including people with incredible minds and great faith. Help us to learn the lessons of history and to enrich our own faith with the thinking and prayerful reflection of others, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday 12th November

- God of my family,
  Come into the places I call home, that I might show and discover something about you in my house, at my mealtime, in my bed.
- Show me how to love my friends and family, and reveal your nature of love to me, through my relationships with those closest to me. Amen.

Friday 13th November

- Today is World Kindness Day. As you spend some time in quiet prayer, today, may it be a motivation to you to take on an act of kindness: perhaps something you wouldn't normally do, but which will be a blessing to someone else.
- As you carry out the act, thank God for the kindnesses you have received over your life.

Saturday 14th November

- God of courage, give me strength for this week.
- When I feel small, remind me that small acts of love matter.
- When I feel unsure, help me take the next faithful step. Amen.