

Remembrance Sunday 11 Nov. 2018

The Role of prayer in bringing peace in times of war

Today we come to remember and pray for peace in our world.

The WAR

From the 28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918, the world witnessed what is now known as the World War 1 or the Great war.

The war ended on eleventh month of the eleventh day at the eleventh hour of 1918. It is estimated that about 37.5 million people were killed as a result of the war. (see <https://www.historyonthenet.com/how-many-people-died-in-ww1>)

The main countries involved were, on one side, 'The Allied forces' which included Britain, France, Russia, Italy and the United States.

These countries fought against 'The Central Powers' which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. (See <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/world-war-i-history>)

Ottoman Empire, was one of the most powerful states in the world during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Ottoman Empire lasted more than 600 years and came to an end only in 1922. At its height the empire encompassed most of south eastern Europe, large parts of the Middle East (now occupied by Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt and Algeria); and large parts of Asia. Islam

was its dominate religion (see <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire>)

African and the Caribbean Islands

Although the war was mainly fought in Europe, the whole world was drastically affected. African and the Caribbean Islands were not isolated from the war.

In Africa, countries ruled by Germany fought against countries controlled by Britain. The white commanders and black African soldiers, recruited by Colonial rulers, were initially from South African and Indian at first, but later joined by Kenyans, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Sierra Leonean, Gambian and Beninese troops. These were employed to invade Togoland in West Africa which was controlled by Germany. Germany was the Colonial power in Togoland then.

For every one soldier, German and British troops used four "native carriers," including women and children, were also engaged. These people and children carried food supplies, weapons, they cooked, scrubbed and tended to their needs. Many of them died of exhaustion, malnutrition and disease. 45,000 among the dead were from Kenya alone. (See <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/africa/world-war-in-africa/index.html>)

From the Caribbean Islands came 15,600 men to serve with the Allied forces. Jamaica contributed two-thirds of these volunteers, while others came from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Bahamas, British Honduras, Grenada, British Guiana (now Guyana), the Leeward Islands, St Lucia and St Vincent. Nearly 5,000 more subsequently volunteered to join up during the Somme offensive of September 1916

Out of a population of 1,700,000 in the Caribbean Colonies of the British Empire, thousands were killed or died and thousands more were wounded.

81 medals for bravery were won, and 49 men were mentioned in despatches. (see <http://www.mgtrust.org/car1.htm> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32703753>)

The Great World War affected the whole world and its outcome had a great impact on the world today. We forget it at our peril.

On the Church stage behind me are the names of some of the young people from this church that went to the Great War and never came back.

The Power of Prayer

In a bid to bring the devastating Great War (1914-1918) to an end, King George V, the Queen's grandfather, called for a national Day of prayer in the Commonwealth. On 4 August 1918 King George V, met to pray with members of the Houses of Parliament as part of on a National Day of Prayer. One hundred days later, on the 11 November 1918, the war ended. (see <https://www.remembrance100.co.uk/100-days/>)

This was no coincidence.

The following year, King George V, issued a proclamation that called for a two-minute silence. Each year since then, at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, the two-minute silence is observed.

National days of prayer were not strange in this country then. A paper from Durham University on 'National days of prayer', indicate that there were twenty-one national days of prayer. held in this nation during the two world wars. (see, note this long paper covers both world wars. Pages 15 – 16 cover the national day of prayer in August 1918 that led to peace 100 days later in November 1918 -

<http://dro.dur.ac.uk/10638/1/10638.pdf>)

I would go as far as saying that without them the out come of the war could have been tremendously different and the world would be a very different place today.

Prayer brings peace

Our God is one who brings peace to hearts and calls us not only to stop violence, but to seek reconciliation. His reconciliation asks that we disempower memories of destruction and their hold over individuals and societies. Through this we can learn to approach difference with compassion, rather than fear – and begin to flourish together in the way God would want us to.

Peace is not dependant on what is going on around us, but on what is going on within. Jesus put it like this

“I’m leaving you peace. I’m giving you my peace. I don’t give you the kind of peace that the world gives. So don’t be troubled or cowardly. (**John 14:27 Good News Bible**)

On the other hand, wars also start from within us. As James puts it

Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. 2 You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it. (**James 4:1-3 Good News Bible**)

PRAYER

Lord, strengthen our hearts, hands and minds, to work together for peace; to see you in one another, and to seek your Kingdom above all things; that your will maybe done, and your Kingdom come, through Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings.

Amen.

References

1 WW1's untold story: The forgotten African battlefields

By Kathleen Bomani, World War I in Africa, Special to CNN

Updated 1325 GMT (2125 HKT) August 8, 2014

<https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/africa/world-war-in-africa/index.html>

2 Durham University

NATIONAL DAYS OF PRAYER:

THE CHURCHES, THE STATE AND PUBLIC WORSHIP IN BRITAIN 1899–1957

<http://dro.dur.ac.uk/10638/1/10638.pdf>

3 Encyclopaedia Britannica Online

Ottoman Empire

HISTORICAL EMPIRE, EURASIA AND AFRICA

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire>

4 Caribbean participants in the First World war

<http://www.mqtrust.org/car1.htm>

5 Remembrance 100

<https://www.remembrance100.co.uk/silence/>