

# Remembrance Sunday

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*10:00am Service – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024*

## **Hebrews 9:24-28 (Oliver)**

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

## **Mark 1:14-20 (Greg)**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

<prayer>

It's been an election year around the world, although it's understandable if your time has not been spent tracking everything along. Nevertheless, the results have told their stories. Any reader of British social history will know that the general election of 1945 was a milestone. The wartime leadership was replaced with a new leadership, as the feeling was of needing to rebuild at home. A slogan of the time sticks in my mind: *'a land fit for heroes'*. It was a cry from after WW1, but much more so after WW2. The masses of those who fought, and on the home front, would say: *'we have given our all, we now expect our prospects and services to meet our needs. Surely this is the land we have been fighting for.'* Our much less colourful phrase now, is to be stakeholders!

A recent news item in the business press reminded me of an effect that I'm sure many of us will not find surprising. It was an update on the top-ten list of largest global companies. I won't read all ten, but the top-five will serve to make my point:

1. Apple (computers, phones, watches and media)
2. NVIDIA (graphical computer devices and AI)
3. Microsoft (software and online services)
4. Google (just about everything, but especially mobile technology)
5. Amazon (anything you want, cheapest price, and the next day)

These are all concerned with providing technology products directly to individuals. Such global giants look upon every single person in the world as their potential customer. Now just think about that for a moment. Super-corporations on the one hand, and individuals on the other – and it's a direct relationship. **So, is that a problem? I think it is. This shape of the *small you connected directly to huge global company* is becoming the *unquestioned normal*.** It has been a quiet invasion.

I'd like to talk about what is therefore going missing – **which is the middle**. In the middle are people, family, friends, real relationships, local things, neighbours, volunteers, community and the environment. **We don't subscribe and log-on to the middle, we have relationships there**. The middle is the place where you learn to be a citizen. Middle is where we are formed as good people, teaching and shaping others into goodness. The middle is where we contact the needs, views and opinions of others. Middle is where respect is grown as a virtue, not as a contract. Middle is where democracy happens, and where most of us can serve in a responsible way. Middle is where there is something worth fighting for. **Imagine losing all that? Well, we might, perhaps we are.**

In Marks' gospel reading we hear of Jesus walking along the shore of his hometown, by Lake Galilee. It's a picture we can easily imagine. When Jesus met those brothers, he called: **'Follow me and I will make you fish for people'**. Or to put it another way he was saying something like *'the good things I bring to you now, you will later take to others.'* So, it's not: *'Follow me towards something nice I've got for you, and which you can keep all to yourself alone.'* **Jesus knows that to call a few to follow and learn, so then they will go themselves, by example, to many more.** All that happens locally, in the middle, where the people are.....and the good things are shared. **The ordinary people responded to the call, and everything changed.**

A strong theme of the Christian faith is that people are an amazing part of creation made in God's image, with his breath of life, inspiration, ability and good spirit. **We are fearfully and wonderfully made.** Talents are what make us all different from each other. In our modern times we call them skills and abilities. **In the middle society your gifts and talents have huge value, because when we work together, we have all we need.**

‘As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen.’ And then Jesus calls them, ‘so they left their nets and followed him.

**Jesus begins to set those fishermen as leaders, to share their gifts for service, according to God’s great new purpose.** *Come into the middle, the place of people.* However, in the world of big- tech corporations it’s not about shared gifts and talents. It’s more about *functions and features*. If that sounds inhumane, it is. If you have only functions and features you will soon be replaced, or at best recycled.

We must expect that those fishermen were good at it. Was all that skill and experience just left there, now apparently useless in the boat? Are they no longer fishermen? Well, not quite. What they have learnt and perfected each day in their trade will be useful later in many other ways. They know how to work in teams, as providers, reading the conditions, operating, maintaining and selling. What else could they do? **In the society middle, we call these *transferable skills*.**

Every single one of us in this church today has talents which can be brought into the middle, shared in the place called *local*. **The middle is a service society where people are at their best, and where a glorious transfer of helps and cares can naturally happen.** So, we must protect it. In the wars, how many were called to drop everything, and take their whole lives to serve somewhere, with others, in the greatest endeavour, to make a better world? *Surely this is the land we have been fighting for.*

To serve in some way is a rite of passage for all ages and generations. The middle is the only place for that, and we must protect it, extend it, and ensure it’s good and vital effects. **But if all we expect to see beyond us is huge corporations then we will only ever learn to demand and consume.**

This is how the government is often now seen – a place for our demands. The same attitude can be towards the NHS, the military, schools, local government, many voluntary organisations and the Church. I don't like the feeling of a demand culture.

Soon we will march to the middle of town. Today we remember so many who were called together into that place where they took what they had, as gifts, even their blood, into a shared place. **We must not lose that call to serve, and the only place where you can do it – in the middle of it all.** Amen