

Whilst Remembrance Day is not a statutory holiday in Ontario as it is in some other provinces, part of our tradition here at St. Mark's is to commemorate Remembrance Sunday, simply because we need to remember. We call to mind all those who have served in the Canadian Defence Forces, and particularly those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, that of their lives.

We remember those from our own parish who have served in varying capacities. We remember as well those known to us, relatives and friends, who were killed in action, and who have died since serving in the Canadian Forces. We remember them and we honour them. We give thanks for the peace and the security that we enjoy today, which their self-offering has helped bring about. We remember them...

Providentially, today is a day on which the church in the Gospel reading directs our attention to Jesus' resurrection. You may recall that Jesus has arrived at Bethany, the home of his close friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus some four days after Lazarus has died. Martha is beside herself with grief and berates Jesus for having not been around when Lazarus was so ill. 'Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died' (John 11.21). Her mood quickly changes as it often can with grief to a wistful hope, even trust as John Proctor notes. 'But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him' (11.22). Jesus brushes off Martha's reproach; instead he promises her, 'Your brother will rise again' (11.23).

It sounds almost glib – a religious platitude we might trot out, often more about making ourselves feel better than responding to the real need of the bereaved. I imagine Martha is still writhing on the inside, as she dutifully nods and gives the rote religious response: ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day’ (11.24). ‘But what about now?’ she probably wants to shout. ‘It hurts too much to wait until the last day.’

That’s when Jesus clarifies for her. ‘I am the resurrection *and* the life’ (11.25). Both these words are so important for Martha – and they’re not saying the same thing. ‘I am the resurrection *and* the life.’ ‘Resurrection’ is what will happen at the End and ‘life’ is what you and I will be raised to. Only ‘life’, Jesus’ life, is not only what we will be raised to; it is what God by his Spirit invites us to experience in the here and now. Our timeless life in God has already begun. In a heartbeat, Martha recognises the resurrection and the life Jesus names are not some far off thing; they are realities Jesus is holding out to her then and there. Because God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living as Jesus reminded the Sadducees in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus’ resurrection life is constantly breaking into our present life – those times when we get a glimpse of what our life together tomorrow looks like even today.

Veterans Affairs Canada has stated that 'On Remembrance Day, we acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of those who served their country and acknowledge our responsibility to work for the peace they fought hard to achieve.' So today, we honour the men and women who served and continue to serve our country by remembering what happened to them, by remembering their courage, their sacrifices, and their accomplishments.

Rev. Lee Lambert reminded us in the Anglican Journal several years ago that soldiers complete missions. What determines 'victory' is not what they did, but rather what we do afterwards. 'Winning' is not just about stopping the war; it's about building a just peace. That's part of 'the life' here and now Jesus talks about with Martha this morning. His self-offering on our behalf gifts us the freedom to embrace a life of just peace. Perhaps that's how we best honour our veterans. We honour them by doing all that God empowers us to do, day after day, in this place, and in the world around us to strive for a just peace. It's a work that will require us to be brave and strong and compassionate and hope-filled, just like the veterans we honour. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.