9th November 2025 – Remembrance Sunday – Psalm 17, Job 19:23-27, Luke 20:27-38

So I wonder, have you seen it? I don't mean the grand finale of *The Traitors* (for a sermon would be a terrible way to introduce any spoilers)…I mean the annual ritual that, no doubt, hours of creative directors spend time plotting each year…I mean, of course, the John Lewis Christmas Advert – as ever, released some four weeks before the start of Advent…

The advert begins in a family home on Christmas morning. The father is clearing away wrapping-paper and discovers one last gift addressed to 'Dad'. It's a gift from his teenage son who we see with headphones on looking anxious, sullen, disaffected and disappearing from the living room. Inside is a vinyl record of the 1990s club anthem *'Where Love Lives'*. As the needle drops on the record and the music plays, the father is transported into a flashback-style nightclub scene filled with 90s nostalgia. Dancing amid the crowd, he spots his teenage son across the dancefloor looking towards him, and the screen then shifts to intimate home-life fragments. The father, at a standstill, is remembering his son as a toddler racing into his arms, as a baby snuggled in his lap. Finally the father returns to the present, embracing his son in the living room, upon whose face a smile has finally cracked. The music fades. The memories settle and the tagline appears – *'If you can't find the words, find the gift'*. Clever. Poignant. Moving. But lest we forget, this is about maximising profit.

The advert is powerful because, presents aside, it demonstrates to us the importance of remembering which lies at the heart of Remembrance Sunday. For when we stop, still, keep silent and remember, we realise and reflect on what matters, we re-learn what is important. As we see written on so many war memorials "*When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."* Perhaps for the purposes of today we might rewrite that line at the end of the advert *'If you can't find the words, find the silence'.*

Because silence and remembering are bound up. Our worship here is full of remembering – remembering we are forgiven, remembering God's Word in the scriptures, *'Do this in remembrance of me'*. The Eucharist is the greatest act of remembrance the world has ever known. And in our worship we keep silence at various points. In prayer. To recall God's presence. To take in what we are doing. To offer thanksgiving. Because silence gives us the space to remember without explanation or argument.

To truly listen to what remembrance teaches us, we must be silent. For the silence we will keep today already hums with memory. It carries the ache of loss and the restless rumours of new wars. It holds the weight of gratitude and the question of whether we have yet learned the way of peace. It's a silence full of names, of faces, of stories half-remembered, full of longing for something the world still struggles to find. And as Christians, within that silence, we remember too the presence of God. The presence of God even in the world's darkest moments. A presence that endures, that gathers all pain and suffering and refuses to let it have the final word.

That's the faith Job holds onto in the midst of his suffering – *'I know that my Redeemer lives'…*Even from the ashes, Job remembers that God's justice and mercy endure. Our silence, too, is not despair but defiance, a trust that the Redeemer lives.

And so our remembering today is not sentimental but hopeful and faithful. It is vital for the health of our society and our world, in ensuring that we don't drift back down those same pathways which led to ordinary people committing unimaginable evil. For that is a road which doesn't come out of nowhere but begins with the erosion of empathy in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. It begins when we refuse to remember our shared humanity and our shared identity as children of God and being made in God's image. Jesus in our gospel reading reminds the Sadducees that God *'is not the*

God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive'. Remembrance is not just backward-looking but a declaration that life – not death – is the final reality in God's kingdom.

In an age where we are constantly bombarded with algorithms and messages on our phones, it has never been easier to refuse to keep silent and refuse to remember. Racism and xenophobia are rapidly becoming commonplace - and those we remember today through their lives and their words would warn us, in the gravest possible terms - to resist the ways of hatred, and instead to pursue all that makes for peace.

May the silence and remembrance we keep today shape our living – the way we speak, the way we treat others, the way we see the world. For remembrance is not just about the past but lays the ground for a better future. And may the God who remembers us, who hides us in the shadow of his wings (psalm 17), who redeems our suffering, who calls us to life beyond death and renews our hope, bless us and keep us.