

## Reflection for Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November: Psalm 105:1-8, Matt 5:1-10 – REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The first two weeks of November are a season of remembering. It begins with All Saints Day, a moment when we remember the generations of Christians who have lived before us, as well as Christians all around the world now.

Here in the UK, our season of remembering continues with Bonfire Night. ‘Remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November...’ It began as a celebration of the king’s protection from a murderous plot, though now our remembering is more typically focused on standing back far enough from the fireworks.

And then comes Remembrance Day itself. It began as a commemoration of the armistice at the end of the First World War – when peace was declared on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. As time went on, the fact that 11<sup>th</sup> November happened on a different day of the week every year meant that, increasingly, attention switched to a common day when the majority of the population wasn’t at work – the second Sunday of November. Hence our service today.

Our Act of Remembrance itself follows at the end of our service, but in this short reflection I want us to return to first principles, or rather first principle: and that is, the importance of remembering. Our memory is our identity. Or to put it another way: **you are what you remember**.

Instinctively we know this to be true. Modern science tells us how powerful our early childhood memories are on shaping our adult selves, for good or ill.

The same power exercises in a different way towards the end of our lives too. Many of us in the last couple of weeks will have been touched by the story of Paul Harvey, a retired music teacher now diagnosed with dementia. Dementia attacks our memory, but what is often remarkable about those who suffer with it is how **core memories can endure**, even when short-term memory is lost. So Paul is still able to sit at his piano and improvise a melody – a lovely gift which the director of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra noticed and turned into the beautiful, moving piece of music we played for our Remembrance montage just now. The music doesn’t just touch our souls, it speaks to the power of remembering. We are what we remember.

The bible, too, is full of references to the importance of remembering. In the Psalms alone, no less than 22 Psalms include the word ‘remember’ – 16 times it talks about *God* remembering, 11 times about *us* remembering.

And here in Psalm 105, we have both, don’t we? Verse 8 reminds us that **‘God remembers his covenant forever’**. That is, God’s promise always to be the God of his people. Even when the going is tough, and the darkness falls, God isn’t going anywhere, the psalmist reminds his readers. God remembers us, and God does not change.

We too, are also told to remember – verse 5: **‘Remember the wonders God has done.’** Why does remembering get such a high billing? The answer is deceptively simple – we find it easy to forget. Even those of us who have a history with God, who have seen answers to prayer, who have seen miracles even, can find ourselves forgetting. It’s the human condition. ‘Tell me the old, old story, for I forget so soon. The early dew of morning has passed away at noon.’

So: **remember, the psalmist says.** Take time to call to mind all those reasons to remain with God, to trust him, to delight in his love. Remember the answers to prayer. Remember the times when you’ve sensed his presence. Remember the big miracles, and the little everyday ones: the beauty of a flower, a phone call that came at just the right time, the kind word of a friend when you needed it.

So on this Remembrance Day, let’s recommit ourselves to the discipline and the joy of remembering. Let’s give thanks for the sacrifice so many made for our sake.

Let’s remember those close to us whom we have loved and lost.

And let’s also remember what God has done, in our world and our lives. Let’s glory in his holy name, let’s look to his strength, let’s seek his face.

And let’s do that, reminding ourselves that God remembers us. God has not forgotten you. God has not forgotten your family. God has not forgotten this world. God remembers.

And so do we, because **we are what we remember.** Amen.