

I have preached on Remembrance Sunday before and to be honest it is quite difficult to find something new to say. In fact I almost cheated and repeated that sermon on the principle that no one would remember it. But Alan said that he remembered that I had used the letters which my uncle wrote from the trenches in the first world war and he was right .

So simply repeating that sermon in its entirety was hit on the head. Nevertheless it remains true that it is very difficult to find a new approach to Remembrance Sunday, so if you have heard some of this before I apologise – no I don't – sometimes it is good to hear something twice – that's my story and I am sticking to it.

On two separate occasions in the last week I have had to search the house for my car keys. You know how it goes – “What did I do with them when I came into the house? Which coat did I have on? Are they in the pocket? My memory is not what it was and I am well into the age group where senior moments occur. If I don't write something down I am very likely to forget it. So I have to have reminders.

Last night I attached this reminder to the back of the front door: **Check you have all your sermon.**

Those of you who attended the joint service two weeks ago will know why. In front of the congregation of both churches I began my sermon and two pages in, found I had left the rest at home. Panic set in and I had to wing the rest of it! Well not quite wing it - but drag it out of my memory. I got most of it, but not all. It was a sharp lesson so I made this reminder for today.

There was one advantage of me forgetting part of my sermon - it was shorter than usual but one more hesitantly presented. I learned my lesson. Yes I have got all my sermon with me. We need reminders to prevent us making mistakes.

I have another reminder but this one isn't to prevent me making mistakes it is to remind me of a happy time. On this memory stick are the photos from our holiday of a lifetime in the States with our daughter. And they bring back happy memories. Isn't it surprising just how many photos you can get on a little thing like this and still have room for more. And you can dispose of the bad ones and the ones you wouldn't want anyone else to see immediately. The joys of technology -

beats taking a film to the chemist and collecting them days later to find that many are hopeless. Young people will not know what I am talking about.

Most people here today are wearing my third reminder – a poppy - to remind us of the sacrificial love of so many in the service of others: a reminder of a love which cost lives so that others could live in peace. The sort of love which Jesus described in our gospel reading “ Greater love has no man that this that he lay down his life for his friends” - so many people in so many conflicts have made the ultimate sacrifice.- Sacrificial love of this kind has been needed and will continue to be needed wherever and whenever the need for power, the greed of people, the intolerance of other cultures and creeds are found. Sacrificial love will be needed at those times when no amount of negotiation, of talking, can prevent the move toward conflict in the pursuit of justice. It will be needed at the times when communication breaks down and strife and conflict of whatever kind are the only future. It has been needed around the world and is still needed today in the war torn areas.

Sacrificial love like this brings sadness, to families including my own grandparents, to people in this community, to friends and to nations but out of that sadness something better should come. .

My next reminder is a cross made from two sticks found in the churchyard – the sort of cross which was used in the hurried burials of the World Wars. It reminds us of another sacrificial love – a sacrificial love which is central to our Christian faith, revealed in the death of Christ so that we may all have eternal life. It is there in the love of God who gave his Son for our futures; in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross in payment for our sins so that we may be redeemed and live in righteousness with God.

That sacrifice indeed brought despair and sadness to the family and friends of Jesus but out of it came the resurrection and the brightness of a future in which we could know and walk with the living Christ.

Aides memoire, reminders of all kinds, written ones, digital ones, commemorative ones and hand made ones- what do we do with them. They are useful items, to jog the memory, to bring back events, but their use is limited if all they are, are tokens. Reminders must be used. My sermon reminder is of no use if I do not read it and act on it. My memory stick will not give me pleasure if I do not plug it into my computer and upload the photos. Our

poppies have little value if we do not accept that it is the responsibility of each of us to work and pray so that we ensure that those who gave their lives in conflicts of the past and present have not done so in vain. We must learn from the lessons of the past, to strive always for peace and work unceasingly to prevent and overcome hatred, that future generations may live in a fairer, safer more equitable world.

And our cross must not just simply remind us that a man died 2000 years ago in Palestine. We cannot look at the cross and be unchanged. We must remember why the cross was necessary and we must give thanks. And our lives must be influenced and changed by that memory.

God showed his love for us in allowing his Son to die on the cross. In return, we must show the influence of that gift and that sacrifice in our lives. It must show in our thoughts, our words and our actions.

Today is Remembrance Sunday - we remember and give thanks for all those who have given their lives or suffered as a result of war. We remember too the sacrifice of Christ.

May all these memories make our lives more caring, our faith more living and our service to others more loving.

Let us not forget.