# Sermon Starter for Remembrance Sunday 2024

Notes for leaders**:**

This sermon is based around the 2024 Scripture for Remembrance Sunday used in some of the UK and Ireland’s main liturgical churches. This ensures it is suitable if the Remembrance Sunday meeting is also an ecumenical or outreach event, or one where uniformed or youth groups are taking part.

## Contextual note:

Remembrance Sunday is a sensitive event for many, recalling loss, grief and conflict. Many people, including military veterans, defence and government workers and their families, and those who work for peace and reconciliation have strong and sometimes conflicting views about how this should be properly recognised. This sermon starter acknowledges those genuinely-held differences and gives space for each community or opinion to be represented.

## Scripture:

Isaiah 52:7-12 *NIV*

How beautiful on the mountains
    are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
    who bring good tidings,
    who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
    ‘Your God reigns!’
Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;
    together they shout for joy.
When the Lord returns to Zion,
    they will see it with their own eyes.
Burst into songs of joy together,
    you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people,
    he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord will lay bare his holy arm
    in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
    the salvation of our God.

Depart, depart, go out from there!
    Touch no unclean thing!
Come out from it and be pure,
    you who carry the articles of the Lord’s house.
But you will not leave in haste
    or go in flight;
for the Lord will go before you,
    the God of Israel will be your rear guard

John 15:9-17 *NIV*

‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: love each other.’

## Sermon structure

### Introduction

* Acknowledging the hurt and loss of Remembrance, the call from Christ to peace amongst the nations and between people (Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 3:15, Romans 15:13). Recognising historical injustices, war crimes and genocide.
* Speaking out in sorrow and praying for current conflicts, local, national and international, and those particularly affecting groups known in the local area.
* Paying tribute to those who are currently serving to defend their country and those who are working for peace, justice and reconciliation.

### Key Scriptural themes

* Recognising the God-given nature of complete peace, and how hard it can be for humanity to attain alone. Isaiah 52 is part of a bigger narrative, sometimes called ‘Deutero-Isaiah’, which prophesies the arrival of a Messiah who will save God’s people from exile in Babylon and make Jerusalem the centre of his Kingdom. Verse 10 explains that God ‘will lay bare his holy arm’ and this symbolism points to Jesus, who comes as peace-bringer to the world. This part of the book of Isaiah speaks forcefully to those who are exiled, dispossessed and despairing.
* Thanking God for those who watch over the cities, towns and nations (the ‘watchmen’ in Isaiah 52:8). ‘Watchkeeping’ is a historical term still used in military circles for those who oversee information on the battlefield and route it to those who need to know. It is crucial that watchkeepers convey accurate and truthful information. Loss of life, injury and property may result from inaccuracies.

In acknowledging the role of ancient ‘watchmen’ we are able to compare this to the roles we are called to play as Christians in a contemporary, information-dense world where so much information (or mis-information) seeks to confuse and mislead us.

* The centrality of God’s salvation, which is for all nations and communities (Isaiah 52:10) and the need to spread this good news (John 15:16) to the ‘ends of the earth’. Much of the world’s news media outlets focus on spreading sad, sensational or distorted news. How can Christians be truthtellers about salvation in a way that is right for the nation and the age?
* A reminder (Isaiah 52:9 and John 15:13) that Christ laid down his life for humanity’s redemption.
* A command, above all other, to love one another (John 15:17).

### The calls to action from Scripture

* To proclaim peace, good tidings and salvation – all Christians can do this, and God calls it ‘beautiful’ (Isaiah 52:7).
* For Christians to ‘touch no unclean thing’ (Isaiah 52:11) and set an example of good character and Godly strength in a divided and unjust world.
* For Christians to ‘love one another’ knowing first that Jesus loves us.

### Conclusion and benediction

* Acknowledging the need for God’s peace, love and justice.
* Loving and caring for those who are hurt in any way from war and warlike action.
* Holding space for a wide range of views about faith and conflict, but proclaiming the universal nature of God’s salvation, which reigns over all earthly things.

### Benediction (from Philippians 4:6,7):

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.