

Our Gospel today is the story of ten bridesmaids: five of them foolish, five of them wise. On the surface it seems rather a lightweight story to have any application to today's theme of Remembrance. The foolish bridesmaids seem guilty of nothing more than a little negligence. And the consequence of their forgetfulness seems so much greater than their small failure, for the bridegroom shuts them out of the banquet and refuses to recognise them: "I tell you I do not know you!" It seems an over-reaction.

But let us think again. What if you were entrusted to prepare a wedding for those who loved you most and when the time came you were simply not there for them? You just hadn't been bothered to get ready, couldn't be bothered to get out of bed, prepare, be on time.

What if this wedding banquet is not just a banquet but the kingdom we long for - a kingdom in which we are called into a relationship with God and one another? What if we just couldn't be bothered? What if we really are, as we are told over and over again, called to be bearers of the light and that light is the light of peace and justice, the light of love and forgiveness and unity and joy? And what if we let that light go out because we are too apathetic, or caught up in our own concerns to remember to hold on to the light... what would that mean?

And what if that bridegroom was one who had loved us so much that he had given his whole life for us and then when he returned we were so 'not bothered' we had just let all the lights go out? I think it could be a little bit like sending off someone to the front line and then forgetting to welcome them home. It could be a bit like letting someone die for you and then simply turning away. Human life is too sacred, it is of God and their offering too great.

Can we simply shut our eyes and go to sleep and forget those pictures which used to dominate our TV screens of coffins returning from Afghanistan? Can we turn off the pictures of war in Syria or Yemen, sleep while our world is destroyed for future generations, shut our eyes to the number of members of our armed forces who end up homeless, abandon any vision of justice and peace?

There are some things and people we need to remember, there are some things we simply have to be awake for, even ready to give our lives for.

Today's Gospel reading is a call to costly remembering.

It is also a warning that there comes a time for all of us when time runs out and we need to choose whether we are prepared to keep the light burning. The pain of war should not lead to a drawing down of blinds (to quote a famous Wilfred Owen poem) but opening up to let in the light of truth both on the tragedy but also upon the promise of the peace of God which requires us all in its making.

And today's reading is also a celebration of the light. For while five of the bridesmaids were foolish, five were also faithful and ready for the bridegroom when he returned. They have stayed faithful and been ready to keep the light burning. They have seized the day through vigilance and loyalty to the things that really matter and they are welcomed into the feast.

Today, present at the wedding feast, are the millions of those who have known the horror of war and longed for peace, indeed given their lives in the hope of it. We are made aware of how vulnerable each human life is and how much those who uphold the light need supporting and defending. Today on Remembrance Sunday we remember because we want to recognize and hold onto the light - and the offering others have made to keep it burning.