**Remembrance Sunday Sermon: 9 November 2025**

Luke 20:27-38

May I speak in the name of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, **Amen.**

This year is the 80th Anniversary of the end of World War II and I thought I would share with you the story of my Grandfather Eric Wilson, who fought in the conflict.

My Grandfather was actually in Germany both at the outbreak and the conclusion of the war. He was on holiday in Germany, canoeing down the Danube in September 1939 with my Grandmother Margaret. I have shared this story in sermons before, so you may remember that because they were canoeing and camping, they did not realise that Britain was at war with Germany until they arrive in Vienna. Leaving their luggage at the YMCA, they travelled back across Europe by train, not speaking to each other, less they gave their nationality away.

Over five years later, Eric Wilson was again in Germany, with the Army Educational Corps. My Grandfather was a teacher and later a school's inspector, so joining the Army Educational Corps seems like a good fit. The purpose of the Corps was to support the educational needs of the Army, buy providing training in current affairs, writing and printing news sheets for the troops and particularly working in news-sheet teams to support the D-Day landings. As a family we know that Eric was on the Normandy Beaches on D Day +4 as there is a record in his diary for 1944, which y Father has. And my cousin has copies of 'The Arrow', the news-sheet that Eric helped to write for the troops, as part of one of those news-sheet teams that were sent with the D-Day landings.

On VE Day, my Grandfather had accompanied troops all the way to Germany, and was in Berlin. Again, we have family records that attest to this, including three German medals and a handwritten note of where they came from, that Eric swiped from a display case somewhere in the capital. For his service during World War Two, Captain (temporary Major) Eric Wilson was awarded an MBE.

Yet, I think what happened after VE Day and VJ Day was more important that what had gone before. Europe and the Far East were devastated. Millions of people were displaced. Millions of people were wounded. Millions more were grieving for lost loved ones. This is where the Army Educational Corps and my Grandfather continued to work, on resettlement schemes and playing a crucial

role in preparing returning soldiers for civilian life through pre-release advice and formation colleges. The 'what next?' after war, is in someways more important than what went before.

Our bible reading from Luke, might not seem like an obvious choice for Remembrance Sunday (even though it comes around every three years), but it is about the 'what next?'. The Sadducees were a sect of Judaism whose members were part of the upper echelons of Judean society. They fulfilled various political, social, and religious roles, including maintaining the temple in Jerusalem. On this particular day, they asked Jesus a question about the levirate marriage (a woman marrying her deceased husband's brother) as a way to trap Jesus with their "no resurrection" belief. This gimmick reflects their particular beliefs, in that they saw the afterlife as simply a continuation of earthly, physical life, complete with social and legal structures like marriage.

As we discover Jesus and the Sadducees had very different views of the 'what next?'

I can almost imagine Jesus' distain of the question as he responds with a theological shrug, dismissing their premise by stating that in the resurrection, people **"neither marry nor are given in marriage".** Jesus is not diminishing our earthly life or love with this statement but is pointing to a different reality after the death. Our post resurrection life will be similar, and also wildly different to our current experience of life. It's a bit like at this time of remembrance we remember people for who they are, not just their role in our lives (as our wife, husband, grandfather etc.). What Jesus is explaining is that in the resurrection, we won't be defined by our earthly relationships, but as children of God, free from the limitations of this world.

Jesus, then uses the Hebrew bible to explain more about the 'what next?' to the Sadducees. He uses the story of the burning bush passage to prove the resurrection, not by discussing marriage, but by stating that God is **"not the God of the dead, but of the living".** This is the core of the hope for remembrance: God is not a God of a forgotten past, but a God who keeps his people alive and in relationship with him. The dead are not gone, but alive to God. We can hold onto the hope that those we remember are in a state of being, they have not ceased to exist, they are alive and with God.

What came next, after the end of World War II, which my Grandfather contributed to in a small way, was not just a rehash of what had gone before

but became a ‘new age’ in which many things were transformed. In the rebuilding of Germany and the recognition of the horror of the Holocaust, new ways of understanding and being came about. Of course, not everything was positive. However some of the benefits included the UN being created, an age of decolonisation began and, in the UK, the National Health Service was founded.

The resurrection too is not just a rehash of our earthly lives. It is new birth or new age where everything is transformed, even though the details are a mystery. Just as the afterlife is not just more of the same, so too the ‘what next?’ after war cannot be a continuation of what went before. While not perfect, there was investment of time, resources and expertise to rebuild Europe and the Far East after the end of World War II.

We know, from the example of World War II and warfare that afflicts the world today that the ‘what next?’ is probably more important, than the war that goes before it. While we have been praying for peace, for a ceasefire between Gaza and Israel, now that there is a fragile peace (at the time of writing this sermon), the ‘what next?’ is just as complex. For the work of rebuilding, healing, reconciliation and forgiveness will require lots of time and effort, and many miracles and grace from God.

On this Remembrance Sunday, as I have briefly shared my Grandfather’s contribution to World War II and more importantly to what came after, we are reminded to live in boldness, knowing that we are God's children. Yet, we are also people of the ‘what next?’ and we live in the hope of resurrection. And sometimes that ‘what next?’ in the present, is as important as the ‘what next’ of our eternal life to come.

Thus, as we remember the sacrifice of millions of people who served and gave their life in World War II, we renew our commitment to peace. Not only to pray and work for peace, but also to pray and work for the ‘what next?’ after peace. For the work of rebuilding, healing, reconciliation and forgiveness.

**Amen.**

Rev’d Liz Wilson, 27 October 2025.