

Hi,

I have been invited to speak to you on behalf of the Horsforth Council and the Horsforth Branch of the Royal British Legion of which I am currently it's Chairman.

My name is Reverend Larry C. Hibberd. Many of you will know of me as I have had the honour and privilege of taking the Remembrance Service at the cenotaph on the corner of Fink Hill for a number of years.

You have probably realised by now because of the present restrictions, there is to be no Remembrance Service at the cenotaph this year. However there will be a token Council and Legion presence sometime throughout the appropriate weekend. This will include a laying of a representative wreath. The raising and lowering of the Legion flag, coupled with the customary salute. That being said, I would like to assure you that everything will be done in our collective power to retain the dignity and the sentiments of our annual tribute, both at the cenotaph, and at the border-stone in Stanhope Drive, including the trees that line that road which formerly housed brass plaques with the names of all those of the fallen from the Horsforth, community, where a cross will be laid.

Had there been a Service this year, my theme was to have been, NEVER FORGET accompanied by a particular song of the same title by Michelle Pfeiffer. The title and words of the song accentuate the sentiments of those whose loved never returned home.

'Will you come home?

We will never forget you. You will never leave, in our hearts we kept you.

You'll remember all the days of summer sun,

hold me close in dark November before the winters come....

Tell me all the things you wished for, tell me all that you would want to live for, when you come home....'

From 1939 to the present day millions have said their farewells to loved ones, watched them go off to war, all believing they would return, yet many never did. Their experiences echo the sentiments of many, like my wife Yvonne, who at the age of six waved her dad goodbye at the train station in 1944 not realising she

would never see him again in this life. War widows everywhere experienced the same dilemma.

Even this year those who lost family and friends with Covid-19 also, had to leave loved ones in the care of hospital Staff. None able to visit or say goodbye to those loved ones who did not return.

PRAYER

Therefore I offer a prayer for the survivors of past loved ones regardless of time. Those recently who are caught in the atmosphere of Depression, Loneliness & Fear

Those who have the responsibility of caring.

TO NEVER FORGET THEM!

I have taken the essence of this prayer from my experiences as a minister having had to take the services of some of those loved ones and because I did not want the words of this prayer to be just words, I needed them to be full of substance and depth, out of the reality of hope, hope dashed, and yet hope sustained.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning

We will remember them

1 - LOSS

To Our God, the creator of heaven & earth we turn to You, for over the years and indeed even this last year, we are weighed down by the loss of life of our loved ones, our nearest and dearest, who have been so central to our lives. We know loving someone comes with the risk of pain, separation and loss, yet though we understand this, it does not help or comfort us today.

It still leaves us feeling lost fearful, abandoned and alone. So we turn to You our God for help and the strength to endure. For what has gone before we can never get back. Our memories may help and comfort us, but only You can comfort us with the healing we need from the pain that seeks to overwhelm us.

The Psalmist can help us,

"I lift up my eyes to the hills," and ask, "where does my help come from? We pray we too can say with the Psalmist, "My help comes from You the Living God." Yet

many of us at this time can only plead with You, that You remain close to us. That You hear our words, and those cries, that come from our innermost being.

2 - DEPRESSION

For those that are fighting the symptoms of Depression Loneliness and Fear. We come to You Lord, for Your help at this time of need. Our souls are full of unrest, our nerves are failing. The lives we led are so different now. We live in constant fear of our very lives. We cannot connect with friends and family as we used to. Everything has become so impersonal, every day we think, What will this day bring? Nothing is clear for the future. Our world as we knew it has changed beyond recognition. Why are we so afraid of being alone?

*Thankfully, we do have You, our God we can turn to. The Psalmist in Psalm 91 gives us hope again. 'God is our refuge, a fortress, one in whom we can trust. We trust in You our God, Your word reminds us, You will **Rescue** us from the Fowler's snare, and the destroying plague. You will shelter us under Your wings, a protecting shield. And we will not fear those terrors of the night, or the plague that ravages at noon. For this journey to continue, We put our trust in you, to receive Your love and goodness to see us through this difficult season*

3 - CARING RESPONSIBILITY

Lord God, you have given many the task of caring for others in this world. We pray that You would give each one of them the will and the strength and the courage to continue through, until this season is over. Give them the support they need for their own well-being. Give them the wisdom to understand their limitations. To seek help if they themselves may need it. And when the burden seems too heavy for them, may Your Presence sustain them.

I Will Never Leave You, nor forsake you, is Your promise to all who would call on You Lord.

*May they always remember You love them, You created them for such a calling and purpose as this and that You God are **Their** and **our** ultimate Carer, whatever the circumstances, for nothing is too difficult for You, the Creator of Heaven and Earth..*

Finally, we plead, “ Living God hear our petitions, for You are our refuge, whom shall we fear? You are the strength of our life, of whom shall I be afraid? Because we are never truly alone may these my spoken words and this hope in my heart be acceptable to You, O God, Our Rock and Our Redeemer.

AMEN.