

Archbishop Justin gave the Thought for the Day on BBC Radio 4's Today programme this morning.

***Read the text below:***

In August 1914 it was said that it would be over by Christmas. Nowadays we might call it a surgical strike. By the time it was over, four years later, they called the war to end all wars. Yet that tragic summer of 1914 was followed by 75 years of one kind of global war or another, until the fall of the Berlin Wall. And even today, after so much agony and suffering, we cannot begin to number the conflicts of the world.

The Great War was a war of peoples, not just armies. Letters, films, photos and the stories passed down speak of fear, courage, sacrifice, determination, faith. Because it was a war of peoples, people began to dream of a better world. But broken promises and the scramble to control land and resources left scars that still echo in the conflicts dominating the news headlines today, from the UK, Ukraine, through the Middle East, to Africa and beyond.

***Listen to a recording on the BBC website (1hr 47mins)***

It was a war to be repeated. In his diary of the 14th December 1939, a British General, Alan Brooke, wrote:

'On the way went through La Bassee and up to the main road to Neuve Chapelle with all its memories of the fighting in 1915. I also went past the first billet I ever occupied near the front in 1914 in the vicinity of Vieille Chapelle.'

He continues: 'It was just a mass of memories which were given a bitter tinge through the fact that I was back again, starting again what I thought at the time I was finishing for good and all. It gives me a lonely feeling going back over these old grounds, so many of them that were with me then are now gone, and so many that are with me now were not born then!'

And so today. South Sudan, Myanmar, Mosul, Aleppo, Israel and Gaza, Ukraine, Nigeria: we watch and feel for those suffering, fear for those not yet born. Never again, the slogan after so many wars, requires us to say yes to the words of Jesus who tells us that love for our enemies is in fact the only way to eliminate them – we make them our friends – and change our world forever.

2 min read

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