

Gospel reflection

On 11 November we remember those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts. Our reflection is on the gospel reading ([Matthew 25:14-30](#) The parable of the talents) with the lens of the old testament reading for the week ([Judges 4:1-7](#) Deborah, one of the judges).

In a week when a country seemingly divided saw Kamala Harris - the first USA woman and person of colour - on track to become vice-commander-in-chief of the largest military force in the world, the old testament reading tells about Deborah, also a woman, probably of colour, who was leader, co-general, and a prophet of Israel in ancient times.

Israel was at war with the Canaanites and Sisera was the commander of the Canaanite army. Deborah prophesies that Sisera will be delivered into the hands of a woman and one might expect that to be Deborah given that she is leading the army alongside her general. Instead, another woman, Jael, is the one to kill Sisera. Sisera flees from the battlefield and unpredictably arrives at Jael's tent. Jael was an Israelite sympathiser but married to an ally of Canaan so Sisera would have assumed it was safe. She makes him comfortable so he falls asleep and then she grabs a convenient weapon to hand – a tent peg – and kills him. Aside from the gruesomeness of it all, one of the interesting things about Jael's story is that she could not possibly have planned it and she breaks many social conventions to do it. There was an opportunity in front of her and she acted with what she had.

In the gospel reading we again see God working through unexpected characters. The wealthy man in the parable gives a lot of money (1 talent is about 20 years' salary) to his servants. 'Servants' was a broad category but nonetheless, that is a lot of money to entrust to people of low status. The master works through them just as God worked through the Canaanite king, Deborah and Jael. The first two servants use what they have been given and act on the opportunity presented to them.

On remembrance day, as we reflect on the horror and loss of war, it is hard to see God at work. War is a denial of God's commandment of love but it can still be used by God. One of the questions asked about soldiers on the western front in WW1 is, "Why did they go over the top?" It was often terror and death to do so. One answer was, "Because the guy next to me did". They did what they were called to do with what they had and what they had was each other.

God works through us and the relationships between us. Schools/ECSs are rich in relationships, some easier to handle than others, with God working through each and every one.

A prayer for Remembrance Day:

(Source: <http://ourredeemernewark.org/memorial-day/>)

Heavenly Father, as our nation pauses today to remember those in the military who have given their lives for freedoms we enjoy, we pray you would have us all look to you for strength, comfort and guidance. Be with all who serve in our Armed Forces. Bless them and their families. Grant your loving protection. Let peace prevail among all the nations, O God. Especially let your mercy rest upon our land, even as we acknowledge with thanksgiving your past goodness on this country. If it is your will, preserve the lives of the men and women in uniform as they defend our citizenry. Most of all, we pray that you would turn the hearts of all – military and civilian – to your holy Word where we find the true peace for our sinful souls that surpasses all understanding. Keep us repentant of sin. Move us to know, take hold and treasure your saving grace. In the name of Jesus, our Saviour and Your beloved Son, who alone gives this peace and hope for eternity, we pray. Amen.