

## Imagine Armistice by Deacon Amy Blumenshine

{Note to readers: This sermon was given on 11.11.18 referencing the scriptures read that day Micah 6:6-8, 1 Peter 3: 8-11, Psalm 23, Mark 8:34-3. Italics below identify where scripture is echoed. The footnotes are added to this version. Also in the week prior, spanking was in the news as harmful to children as was the mass shooting in Thousand Oaks by a former Marine. For a limited time, extensive background materials can be found at [http://oursavioursmppls.org/hiro\\_naga.html](http://oursavioursmppls.org/hiro_naga.html)}

May the words of my lips and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, oh fount of Love. And may all of us hear your voice today.

**Following Jesus, we ask, *What does it accomplish to gain (dominate) the whole world and lose the soul?***

Today is Armistice Sunday for the US and other countries that participated in World War I one hundred years ago. Today we too will stop as our ancestors did at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. One hundred years ago at that moment, when the insane industrialized killing finally ended, some said they could hear the voice of God.

I wonder what God was saying? {whisper} Stop it, stop it, stop it

Don't let anyone trick you and glorify what was called the Great War.<sup>1</sup> Like the Great Storm, sometimes things are called Great because they're massively awful. From the perspective of 100 years, let's tell some truth about war -- it's suicidal – nobody wins. It curses the children with the sins of the parents.

For months after the armistice, The prevailing side wanted revenge so the starvation of Germany continued, with both a blockade of food and medicine and prohibition of fishing in the North Sea. Meanwhile, a flu virus was sweeping the globe. We now know that this particular flu sickened one out of 3 people in the world, and killed 50-100 million. Some areas with little prior flu exposure, like

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<sup>1</sup> A condemning description by Winston Churchill is posted at the end of this sermon.

some villages in Alaska, were wiped out.<sup>2</sup>

The flu had developed its virulence in the horrific conditions of the war, which included propaganda and censorship. The public wasn't supposed to know. So military medical experts who plead for public health interventions early on were overruled and we the public were deceived and our domestic health betrayed so that war-making could be pursued. It was called the Spanish flu but most experts believe it originated in Kansas.

That flu killed more Americans than the war itself. Those whom the country had sent to war spread the disease: a domestic infection reaching into the bedrooms of the nation.

Ponder with me whether the entry of the US late in the war inadvertently brought the deaths of at least 50 million civilians.

Of course, those sent to fight-- America's valiant and innocent doughboys -- couldn't have known. Even though the majority had been drafted, most were convinced that they were going to fight the war to end all wars. So in the aftermath of the great -- massively bad -- suffering from that war, the survivors formed the American Legion and, along with women who could newly vote, were part of an international grass roots anti-the-next-war movement. They achieved a major international agreement outlawing war.<sup>3</sup> Before that wars were just something that powers did in fighting for territory and plunder.

Some historians claim that Germany's military moves to expand their empire had been motivated by fear.<sup>4</sup> If we don't dominate them, they're going to dominate us. And one hundred years ago, the "sun never set" on the British empire which included South Africa, India and China. Having all of the European empire nations "armed up" made jumping into war too easy. Within months of an individual's political crime, assassinating the arch-duke in a call for independence

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/1918-pandemic-history.htm> and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862337/>

<sup>3</sup> By 1928, fifteen major countries had signed the Kellogg-Briand pact that officially made war a crime. Frank Kellogg, who helped negotiate the pact while he was US Secretary of State, is the only Minnesotan to have won the Nobel Peace Prize. The pact is named the General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/05/was-the-great-war-necessary/377605/>

(how did that use of lethal violence turn out?), the entire continent was aflame – and it would spread to the colonized territories around the globe, as well.

Of course, as is always the case, there were different motives. Some may have been defensive out of fear against being dominated, but other were clearly gain-oriented. We now know that that one of the key American architects of how the mid-East got carved up, establishing the House of Saud as monarchs for instance, keeping Syria for the French, was not just being paid by our government. He was secretly also on the payroll of Standard Oil, seeking *10,000 rivers of oil...* (and we're still being motivated to dominate oil—in what's called our national interest.)<sup>5</sup> Now the US military hierarchy says it aims for full-spectrum domination – not just land and sea and sky but space and cyberspace. There is no end to the need to dominate.

Like WWI, however, souls get lost in the course of dominating. {Paused at 11 am for bell-ringing and contemplation: “We remember the soldiers and civilians killed in warfare in every country, and we commit to work and pray for peace until this assault on the Will of the Creator of us all, is finally over.”<sup>6</sup>}

Good people can get tricked into doing things that harm themselves and their loved ones, not just “the enemy.”

It's a myth that war and violence work. Like spanking, we now know that inflicting pain causes harm. Duh? The seeds of trauma are sown; too many hurt people hurt people. Adverse childhood experiences lead to many of our ills.

Those German children who lost their fathers and who survived the starvation and other hard times of revenge became Hitler Youth and troops in WWII. They and other traumatized survivors seized on Hitler's false explanation for their suffering, blaming the Jews (an very old scapegoat and trope that Christians have been primed to believe for centuries.) And Germany really lost its soul.

Fortunately, better angels prevailed after WWII and the Allies implemented the Marshall plan, feeding and caring for people.

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<sup>5</sup> Read about William Yale in Scott Anderson's *Lawrence In Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East*.

<sup>6</sup> Text requested read by Veterans for Peace.

*“Spreading a table in the midst of our enemies.”* And we turned the German enemy -- from two Great-in-a-massively-bad-way wars-- into friends. Hmmp, how about that, *returning good for evil?*

WWI also left us with a new term for what happens when you get hurt from your own dispensing of evil. Blowback – blowback happened when chemical weapons were used; seems that the caustic fumes often blew back hurting the perpetrators, making the use of those weapons of mass destruction not just horrific but suicidal. Now we talk about blowback to the many covert US efforts to dominate.<sup>7</sup> Efforts the American public is not supposed to know about.

*What does God require of us? but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.*

It's time to Imagine Armistice – imagine stop acting to hurt others— May we heed the voice of God, {whisper} stop it, stop it, stop it

Imagine Armistice!

Shut down the black sites around the globe where our tax money has kidnapped people, often from great distances, so unspeakable things can be done to them in secret.

Stop sending in assassination teams to “take out” targets in countless nations in Africa, Asia, and South America.

Stop dropping bombs and drone killings in some of the world's poorest countries.

Imagine Armistice!

Stop cultivating violent opposition forces around the world to overthrow their governments and then betray them.

Stop practicing “games” of world annihilation.

Close the nearly 1000 US military bases in other countries. Bring home those we've sent to risk their souls.

Bring them home— our well-intentioned troops----the mothers and fathers, the intimate partners, away from relationship-toxic barracks

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<sup>7</sup> Blowback also occurs when firing combustible weapons and is a title of a book by Chalmers Johnson [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blowback\\_\(intelligence\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blowback_(intelligence))

living, back to families and the life of caring for each.

Imagine Armistice!

Take away the shooting license--the permission to kill--implicit in our national foreign policy. It's not ok to get what you want by force. Imagine Armistice!

Take that money we're about to waste on new nuclear weapons (\$10 million an hour for 10 years<sup>8</sup>), take the taxed wealth of this nation (more than 67% dedicated to war<sup>9</sup>) and set it to human flourishing.

No more anxiety over how we're going to pay for health care.

No more anxiety over not having decent housing.

### **Instead**

Kids get what they need in school, including the most disadvantaged.

The public gets quality infrastructure, including for alternative energy and transportation.

Advanced education does not require going into debt.

Imagine Armistice -- believe it. Jesus was right!

There is a force more powerful – far more tyrannical regimes have been moved by non-violent resistance movements, *taking up the cross*, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than by war.

It is a mostly unexamined myth that war works – using war to end war is even less likely to be successful than hitting a kid to teach them not to hit. Break the cycle –

The cycle of pain expressed in causing pain to others ends with me. I act to stop it in my life. God keeps giving us opportunities to do better. Jesus shows us a better way. We follow in the footsteps of those who loved us and we seek to leave a legacy of love.

We actually are at an incredible opportunity for global partnership – climate change and nuclear annihilation -- because there's nothing

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/USNuclearModernization - summary>

<sup>9</sup> Related to the parts of the budget Congress controls, discretionary funding  
<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/cost-of/>

like a shared crisis to get people to work together. We are on the cusp of world history's greatest incentives for working together, a uniting of sensible people of good will around the globe.

It's been challenging for our amazing diverse global community of different languages, cultures, religions, and governments to get beyond petty divisions to "a unity of spirit." But nearly all the countries of the world are working on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Nearly all the countries of the world are working to mitigate climate change.

Truly This Changes Everything

*Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*

*Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse;*

*but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing.*

***It is for this that you were called.***

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### **How Winston Churchill described the Great War <sup>1</sup>**

As quoted by John Terraine in *The Great War* 'Churchill: "No truce or parley mitigated the strife of the armies. The wounded died between the lines: the dead mouldered into the soil. Merchant ships and neutral ships and hospital ships were sunk on the seas and all on board left to their fate, or killed as they swam. Every effort was made to starve whole nations into submission without regard to age or sex. Cities and monuments were smashed by artillery. Bombs from the air were cast down indiscriminately. Poison gas in many forms stifled or seared the soldiers. Liquid fire was projected upon their bodies. Men fell from the air in flames, or were smothered, often slowly, in the dark recesses of the seas. The fighting strength of armies was limited only by the manhood of the countries. Europe and large parts of Asia and Africa became one vast battlefield on which after years of struggle not armies but nations broke and ran. When all was over, Torture and Cannibalism were the only two ingredients that the civilized, scientific, Christian States had been able to deny themselves: and these were of doubtful utility."