Sunday 8th November 2026; Remembrance Sunday, Gilling

"Do not stand at my grave and weep; I am not there." These familiar words by Mary Elizabeth Frye speak of a longing many of us carry: the hope that those we love are not finally lost to us. They were written to comfort a grieving friend who could not return home to mourn her mother. Their simplicity gives voice to a deep human need—to believe that love reaches beyond absence, distance and death.

Christian remembrance begins with that longing, but it does not end in memory alone. In Scripture, to remember is not merely to look backwards. It is to allow the past to shape our faithfulness in the present and bring hope for the future. God gives his people signs of remembrance—the Sabbath, the Passover and, above all, the Eucharist—so that they may be re-formed by grace. Remembrance gathers what grief and violence have scattered. It "re-members" the broken bodies; restoring names, stories and relationships to their rightful place among us. Here past, present and future come together in the light of Eternity.

Today, we pay tribute to those whose lives were taken by war and conflict: loved ones, friends, comrades, strangers and generations whose names are carved into memorials or lie in faraway soil. We honour their courage and sacrifice and acknowledge the terrible cost of peace. Yet Christian remembrance must be more than gratitude for sacrifice. It must also expose the greed, fear and failure that make violence possible, and call us to become peacemakers. We remember truthfully so that the wounds of yesterday are not repeated tomorrow.

Jesus gives remembrance its deepest meaning. In the Gospel he declares "is God not of the dead, but of the living?" Death is real, and grief is real, but neither has the final word. The resurrection of Christ reveals that every person held in God's love is alive and is held beyond the grave in the risen Christ. Our hope is not that suffering did not happen, nor that loss should not hurt. Our hope is that God in Christ, receives the dead, heals what humanity has broken and promises a life that suffering, war, hatred and death cannot destroy, and makes all things new.

This is why remembrance stands at the heart of Christian worship. At the altar table, the words of Jesus are remembered each time a Eucharist takes place, "Do this in remembrance of me." We take broken bread and out poured wine and recall a victory won not through domination, but through self-giving love. The Eucharist does not allow us to remember Christ while ignoring our neighbour. It sends us out to embody what we have received: forgiveness instead of vengeance, reconciliation instead of division, service instead of selfishness, and hope instead of despair.

So today we remember with honesty, gratitude and faith. We speak the names; we tell the stories; we lament the waste of life; and we commit ourselves anew to peace. But we do not stand at the grave without hope, because the risen Christ stands with us, as do the fallen and all our loved ones no longer physically with us, but who nonetheless are with us on the white shore at peace.

Our God is not God of the dead, but of the living. May our remembrance honour those who have gone before, giving their lives for us, who are alive in Eternity, and may God

continue to honour them by shaping us into people of resurrection, healing and reconciling love.

Thanks be to God. Amen.