

Rocks play an important role in the book of Joshua. There are at least four different stories of the people of God placing stones upon stones to memorialize an event. The stones become an icon; a symbol that points beyond itself to the truth it conveys. But Joshua is also a story filled with violence, genocide and murder. And each of those left a memorial as well. Broken homes, crumbled walls – the marks that violence leaves on the world. At the heart of Joshua's story is a choice. Four times, Joshua tells the people to pick up rocks, that most rudimentary instrument of war, and decide what kind of memorial you want to leave. You can take that rock and treat it as a weapon, or you can take it and build something upon it. A rock symbolizes the choice between violence and progress. Today calls each of us to make that same choice. We wear a red flower over our heart because it tells a story that we need to remember, but we do it also because it faces us with a choice. In putting it on, we place over our hearts the smallest sword and declare that we will point it inward first. That we will take the hit. That we will pay the debt when we're wronged. The poppy points at us and tells us a story of men and women giving their lives for the dream of peace, of blood shed on our behalf, and then reminds us that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. We can war and we can fight, but the only thing that will ever produce is more death, and more dying. Instead we hear the invitation to be Grace and peacemakers. To take the damage onto ourselves, to hold the pin over our heart and make that ever important choice: how then will we live?

In remembrance we stand with Joshua. Making the choice this morning to fulfill the words of the prophet: swords into plows; spears into pruning hooks. To live between now and not yet: And make the choice for a piece of shalom. Pointing the offense inward is how we find peace in our time.