Sermon:

Over the years weapons of warfare have changed – swords, spears, arrows, bullets, bombs, biological and chemical weapons, even cyber attacks.

WW1 ended 100 years ago today. It was a terrible war, technology overcame bravery, common sense died in the trenches. Many lost lives, some in terror, others seeking glory, volunteers or conscripted. It was the “war to end all wars” – but did not. Why?
Human nature: greed, hatred, pride, jealousy, stubbornness, plain stupidity.

There is something deep within us which is hard to control and so negative towards others, especially those who are different from us.

Over the years religions have fought each other, denominational rivalry, Maori/Pakeha, even with the Waitangi Treaty. Witness the increasing polarisation in US, the aggro over Brexit, the blatant cheating in sport, the subjugation of women by men with power.

All this and much more. Micah - sees the need for a transformation within human nature.

But how can this ever happen?

This is where Jesus comes in. The question of who Jesus was becomes important.

If he was just a good man, if only a prophet, then he is helpful but not life-changing.

But from Early Church Jesus was believed to have shown us what God is like, was actually God himself in human form.

Mark reading – Jesus made a sacrifice.

In war we talk about sacrifice, usually an *unintended* consequence of others’ decisions,
eg generals with dreams of breakthrough, leaders far removed from the frontline.

Soldiers were killed, not for who they were individually, but because of their nationality.

Today we remember also the sacrifice of Jesus – offered *knowingly*, with no general or leader ordering, killed precisely because of who he was.

In WW1, sacrifice brought little, was cheap, millions offered for tiny gains; it was almost a pointless sacrifice.

But Jesus’ sacrifice brings reconciliation, peace, forgiveness, ie God’s love; this was *not* a pointless sacrifice. Transformation - swords into ploughshares.

At a time when we recall sacrifice there is good reason to remember those who lost their lives in warfare – so how much more, he who lost his life on a cross?

Communion as celebration and transformation. Peace begins with us and within us.