

## Sermon Remembrance Sunday 2022

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

This is a piece of the Berlin Wall- or rather, more accurately, this was a piece of the Berlin Wall. Berlin has become a rather sexy place to visit in the last twenty years or so, since the wall came down, but it wasn't in the 1970s, when I first started to cross the wall. Now it's difficult to find much evidence of where the wall really was. There are a few brass studs in the pavement near the Brandenburg Gate, there is a small stretch of sanitized memorial in the north of the city and there is a one kilometer stretch in the East, which has become a graffiti wall, regularly re-adorned by artists, known and unknown alike. But the remaining two hundred

and sixty miles or so have gone, vanished without trace. Earlier Walls too, have largely crumbled - Hadrian's across north Northumberland, and the Great Wall of China, exist now for tourism, Donald Trump's Wall along the southern US border with Mexico was half built when he lost power. Still the Wall built by Israel stands – but all the evidence suggests that Walls do not work, they will eventually fall. Walls of brick, concrete and barbed wire as much as walls of hard hearts and stubborn wills. And yet we go on erecting them.

Yes, we all do it, walls to protect myself, fire walls to protect my data, walls we build round families, bubbles we called them in Covid days, remember? Walls we erect in community, even

in the Church, walls we seek to erect to keep our countries rich and others poor- walls to distinguish between us and them, in and out.

A wall is, of course, primarily built for security, but what this really means is protection from each other. To mark out territory. Is it a basic human instinct. Basic or base? Perhaps more significantly walls are signs of our unwillingness to take risk, our failure to practice what we preach, to love one another. For there is no wall between us and God- but rather Christians assert that Jesus Christ **unites** divinity and humanity. As St Paul reminds us 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus'.

Today we remember all those victims of warfare – the injured, the dead , the displaced and the bereaved precisely because of the walls erected in our broken world and worlds, human failure, personal failure too, which ends in warfare. Failure which, even this year, has led to the tragedy of the disastrous war on our own continent once again. Plus Jamais, Nie wieder- but it is happening in the towns and countryside of Ukraine.

And yet the message of the Gospel is clear that Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called Children of God.

How do we make peace? 101 Engineer Regiment, represented here today, has a long

history of peace-making, though engineering works to rebuild, reconcile, to bring people back to gather- to build bridges rather than walls, and safely to dispose of bombs. But for each of us, amidst Fake News, hate speech, racist graffiti, blame culture, where are the bombs being disposed, the bridges built, by our own living in faithfulness to this command 'Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God?' How can we establish peace? Surely, for Christians the answer lies in inhabiting the space Jesus Christ occupied, in living in his way, his model of being. For he is indeed that bridge- the fully human, fully divine, the man in whom we see what God looks like in human form. Did he build walls- or rather did he dare to tear them down? This man who ate with

sinners, dined with publicans and prostitutes, healed the outcast and unclean, had nowhere to call home, who spoke of the love shown by foreigners. Where are we in his bridge-building living?

Dare we, I wonder, like Jesus of Nazareth, tear walls down?

Blessed are the Peacemakers for they shall be called children of God: This is the very vision given us in Christ, the Son of God. Imitating this vision, uniting ourselves with the God we see in Jesus is surely the way to honour those who died to secure our peace and whose sacrifice we remember today, and the best way of building a different sort of world- a peaceable world.

As COP27 meets in Egypt we are reminded that warfare is not just a matter of a far away battlefield, as the war in Ukraine drags on relentlessly, we are reminded that we live now in a global village- for what happens in the Donbas, impacts us- in grain supplies, in gas supplies, and what happens in the Solomon islands or the coast of Bangladesh will also soon be our experience of rising coastal water levels in the Thames Estuary too. New walls will emerge, between those who have and those who have not unless we learn to remember our body, the Body of Christ, to build bridges not walls.

And the irony, of course, is that at the heart of this bridge building, this self sacrifice, is the

cross of Christ, which is placed outside the city wall, and yet is the very heart of overcoming those walls, as St Paul again reminds us 'In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free'.

For the peacemakers are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of him who gives everything for the sake of God's peace and justice, truth and love. Not where peace is but the absence of war, but where peace is much more the lifeblood of the reign of God, the overcoming of hatred and division, disease and displacement.

On the cross Jesus confronts the hate and anger, disease and divisions of the world. He risks it with self-giving love. He receives the



worst the world can give, but goes on loving. He lays down his life for his friends and he asks us to do the same.

For in God's kingdom the fortress is not a wall, but a faithful heart and all her paths are peace.