

Remembrance Sunday 2020

Romans 8:31-39

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sermon

As we carry out this really important Act of Remembrance today, I want to highlight one phrase from St Paul’s letter which Carol read for us. ***“Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.” “Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.”***

These words are amongst some of the most powerful words in the bible, and they speak into this time of Remembrance, they speak to us in this very odd and challenging time we’re currently living in, and they speak to the most desolate of circumstances. Indeed, St Paul wrote them out of a personal knowledge and experience of extraordinary hardship and personal suffering.

“Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.” “Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.” There is no power in the universe strong enough to separate us from God, who is all in all.

There is a beautiful verse in the racy Old Testament Book the Song of Songs which says, “Love is as strong as death.” But I want to say in the light of St Paul’s words about the work of God’s love in Jesus Christ that God’s love is STRONGER than death. The Cross and the resurrection of Jesus tells us that love is stronger than death. It’s stronger and more powerful than horror, loss, tragedy, fear, hostility, hatred, conflict and war! ***“Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.”***

This truth, this promise gives me great encouragement and hope as I read the names of the fallen and try to get my head around what suffering they may have endured... that God and his love was not separate from them. No bullet, no bomb, no virus, no gas chamber or torture, no hatred, no fear, no isolation or loneliness... not even death itself separates us from the love of God or defeats the love of God.

This was a truth for the fallen from the past who we remember, and it’s a truth today for the whole world.

Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, of Jos, Nigeria writes about the current battle raging for the heart of Nigeria. Thousands have been killed and thousands more driven from their homes. Boko Haram want to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state. And armed Fulani raiders are slaughtering Christian villagers. But despite the terror Archbishop Kwashi says: ‘Whatever the gunmen do; when the suicide bombers do their worst, God’s message will always be: “I love you. I have given my Son for you. Turn to Him and live.” Neither bomb nor bullet can separate us from the love of God.

If we all truly search our hearts deep down we know these words to be true. “Nothing can separate me or you from the love of Christ.”

In the greater conflict between good and evil of which war, conflict and our own struggles are just a small part, the victory has been won by God who is love, and however horrific the earthly story, we have in and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the knowledge and the hope that evil and death is not the last word in human existence. God is love, and love is the first and the last word and his love will conquer all.