



## Fifth Sunday in Easter Sunday, May 19, 2019

### “Good Fences Make Good Neighbours” Called Beyond our Anxiety



#### **The Berlin Wall that separated East and West Germany from August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1961 to the beginning of its demolition on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1990**

Human beings and human civilization are always in the process of movement, change, flux. At times we live with each other more happily, harmoniously and justly, than at others. On the one hand, we long for each other – we cannot live alone – but on the other it appears that our longing for others has its limits, and our tribalism ‘kicks in’ and the walls go up. Speaking anthropologically and psychologically– if modern philosophers are at least partially correct – anxiety stands behind both behaviours. Our need for others, is driven by our anxiety about our isolation and lack of completeness, but equally, our rejection of the other, is motivated by our anxiety of being overwhelmed.

At the end of this liturgy, I have attached the photo of one of North America’s greatest poets: Robert Frost (1874-1963). His poem, “Mending Wall”, written at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, asks this question about the human condition: our anxiety that locks us into isolation and then into community building and then back into isolation. In the poem, Frost reports a conversation between two country neighbours, in rural New England, who one spring day, meet to walk along the wall that separates their properties, and to repair it where needed. The speaker in the poem is a progressive minded person, who starts to question the need for such a wall in the first place. The neighbour, is a traditionalist, and has, it seems, little time for such nonsense: ‘*Good fences make good neighbours,*’ is all he will say. The opening line of Frost’s poem – “*Something there is that doesn’t love a wall*” – implies that the idea of a wall isn’t straightforward. The speaker in the poem, wants his neighbour, to explain why is it that walls necessarily make good neighbours, but in the end, we are left hanging, the question is never answered.

## OUR GATHERING

### Announcements

#### Greeting.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
The Lord be with you.

***And also with you***

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

The One who was born an outsider;

***the very same One who died an outsider.***

The same one who died;

***the very same one who lives.***

The same one;

***the very same one who brings us to life***

#### The Paschal Candle

We have lit the candle knowing  
that the Risen Christ overcomes death and despair  
***and shows us how to live.***

**Hymn: My heart and voice I raise** (TiS 225, Ascalon, Benjamin Rhodes)

#### An Opening Prayer

We human beings are a strange lot. On the one hand we crave community, while on the other we scorn it. To understand ourselves is a struggle, let alone understanding others. Perhaps this is the reason that our historical experiments in community are so ambiguous and fractured. We need each other in order to be more than what our lonely individuality makes us. But we experience others as a limitation upon our freedom to be what we want. On the one hand, we are anxious alone. On the other hand, we are anxious with others. The American poet Robert Frost, deals with this reality in the poem "Mending Wall". Do we make good neighbours by knocking down the fences we build between us, or is it in building the fences in the first place, that good neighbours are maintained...if at a distance?

**The Need for Walls** (Acts 1:11-18; John 13:31-35 and Robert Frost, "Mending Wall")



**The fortified fence between the two Koreas**

“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall. . .” (*Robert Frost*)

Some One there is, who embraces us all,  
through his life, death and resurrection, barriers come down;  
whose generosity declares that none of us are unclean,  
who says no to the purity systems  
we build in our private and public lives  
to include and exclude  
to love and hate.

**...Jesus is one who doesn’t love a wall.**

And this one, Peter  
discovered in the fall of a rigid prejudice, held so long,  
the voice of God

**...Our Lord is one who doesn’t love a wall.**

To love the other who is so different, so alternative,  
in both our smaller intimate and bigger public lives;  
and more: to love as Jesus loved.

**...Jesus is one who doesn’t love a wall.**

When at last we are found by this One who loves us without walls,  
One to whom we can pour out our soul;  
we fail to grasp the moment, to dwell in it;  
our words are so rusty our actions so corroded;  
feeble from being kept in a small cramped dark space.

**...Lord Jesus, allow us to see the light, to dwell in it and to live it.**

## The Peace

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

**SMG**

### LET'S HEAR THE WORD

#### A Way into the Readings: About Our Human Condition of Anxiety

Anxiety is the experience of the tide going out, the seawater draining away, revealing a self, stranded on the sand. Anxiety is that basic mood when one first distinguishes oneself from the world and becomes self-aware.

**Simon Critchley on Heidegger (The Guardian, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009)**

Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns... and which itself contains the answer to the question of a meaning of our life.

**Paul Tillich**



**The wall between Israel and the West Bank**

**Acts 11:1-18 (The Message)**

**Pam Mayrick**

**God breaks through: Peter moves beyond his rigid faith based exclusivism**

Luke brings us to one of the crunch points in early Christianity: how it would handle non-Jews. Fortunately, we know about the issues also from Paul, who wrote 30 or 40 years earlier. At stake was whether gentiles, non-Jews, could also be counted among God's people. Was the good news also for them? There were many different answers. There have also been many different understandings both of the problem and of the

way, at least, Luke's saw the solution being given. The problem is complex and our response to it has implications still today. Beginning with Jesus' ministry, it is clear that he claimed that in his ministry something was beginning which would in future come to full reality. Its impact would be good news for the poor and hungry. He addressed these hopes to his own people, Israel. At the heart of his message was the generosity of God whose goodness reached out to all, including the marginalised and the downright wicked.

**11** <sup>1-3</sup> The news travelled fast and in no time the leaders and friends back in Jerusalem heard about it—heard that the non-Jewish “outsiders” were now “in.” When Peter got back to Jerusalem, some of his old associates, concerned about circumcision, called him on the carpet: “What do you think you’re doing rubbing shoulders with that crowd, eating what is prohibited and ruining our good name?”

<sup>4-6</sup> So Peter starting from the beginning, laid it out for them step-by-step: “Recently I was in the town of Joppa praying. I fell into a trance and saw a vision: Something like a huge blanket, lowered by ropes at its four corners, came down out of heaven and settled on the ground in front of me. Milling around on the blanket were farm animals, wild animals, reptiles, birds—you name it, it was there. Fascinated, I took it all in.

<sup>7-10</sup> “Then I heard a voice: ‘Go to it, Peter—kill and eat.’ I said, ‘Oh, no, Master. I’ve never so much as tasted food that wasn’t kosher.’ The voice spoke again: ‘If God says it’s okay, it’s okay.’ This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back up into the sky.

<sup>11-14</sup> “Just then three men showed up at the house where I was staying, sent from Caesarea to get me. The Spirit told me to go with them, no questions asked. So I went with them, I and six friends, to the man who had sent for me. He told us how he had seen an angel right in his own house, real as his next-door neighbour, saying, ‘Send to Joppa and get Simon, the one they call Peter. He’ll tell you something that will save your life—in fact, you and everyone you care for.’

<sup>15-17</sup> “So I started talking. Before I’d spoken half a dozen sentences, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us the first time. I remembered Jesus’ words: ‘John baptized with water; you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So I ask you: If God gave the same exact gift to them as to us when we believed in the Master Jesus Christ, how could I object to God?”

<sup>18</sup> Hearing it all laid out like that, they quieted down. And then, as it sank in, they started praising God. “It’s really happened! God has broken through to the other nations, opened them up to Life!”

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

### **Revelation 21:1-6 (New International Version)**

This passage is a tapestry of Old Testament images of hope. Notice that the hope is for both a new heaven and a new earth. In many people's theology, hope has been in heaven only. Earth is left behind or irrelevant. No need to care about it. The writer stands in the tradition of Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, which has its roots in a positive attitude towards God's creation rather than a dualism which sees spirituality as abandonment of what we are and where we belong. Paul could also speak of a renewal of creation in Romans 8:18-23. If we follow the gospel logic of affirming the kingdom of God not just as a future hope, but as an agenda for the present, we might find here much more: a deep engagement in love for earth.

**21** Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”<sup>[a]</sup> for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.<sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’<sup>[b]</sup> or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

<sup>6</sup> He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

### **John 13:31-35 (JB Phillips Translation)**

Rob Mayrick

The night had begun. Judas had gone off to lead the “possie” to arrest Jesus. John’s narrative symbolism, ‘it was night’ (13:30), says it all. But in reality, it is Judas who enters the darkness. Jesus, by contrast, faces ‘the hour’ of which he had often spoken,

first in response to his mother (2:4), but before that as the greater event to come, when the angels would ascend and descend upon him as the Son of Man (1:50-51). Now that moment begins. The Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross, but to the eyes of faith, he will be lifted, exalted into God's glory (12:32). The path through the darkness of what is to follow will lead to the divine presence. Without diminishing its pain John transforms the hour into an hour of celebration and victory (12:31-33). That said, there is something else in this reading as well; an ethical dimension which is to characterize what it is to be Christian: the law of love. This imperative stands for the John's own community who were possibly 'at each other's throats', but equally stands for all Christians for all times, faced with the human tendency to limit the call to love to those we find loveable, agreeable, of our tribe.

<sup>31-35</sup> When he had gone, Jesus spoke, "Now comes the glory of the Son of Man, and the glory of God in him! If God is glorified through him then God will glorify the Son of Man—and that without delay. Oh, my children, I am with you such a short time! You will look for me and I have to tell you as I told the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow.' Now I am giving you a new command—love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you must love one another. This is how all men will know that you are my disciples, because you have such love for one another."

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Hymn: Father in heaven** (TiS 465, Halad, DT Niles)

**A Film Clip: "Lion" (1:22:28 – 1:28:20)**

Lion is about an Indian-Australian immigrant, who was adopted as a young orphan by parents living in Hobart, Tasmania. In the clip, we journey with Saroo as he struggles to the point of break-down over his identity, overwhelmed by anxiety for himself and his Indian family.

**Some thoughts... anxiety, hope and meaning**

**Let's Give: Our Offerings**

**Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
*praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

## Prayer of Dedication



The wall between the US and Mexico

### Prayers of the People

Seng Eng Low

Through the Easter season the one who prays, at the end of each petition offers the words, "You call us to be an Easter People". The people respond, "May we be a People of Hope".

**We finish with a modern interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, written by an American Quaker.**

*Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother,  
 holy and blessed is your true name.  
 We pray for your reign of peace to come,  
 we pray that your good will be done,  
 let heaven and earth become one.  
 Give us this day the bread we need,  
 give it to those who have none.  
 Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,  
 from each one to each one.  
 Lead us to holy innocence,  
 beyond the evil of our days.  
 Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.  
 For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:  
 Amen*





**Detention Centre on Nauru**

**Closing Hymn: Lord the light of your love is shining** (TiS 675, Shine Jesus Shine, Graham Kendrick))

### **Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is risen!

We see reality through resurrection  
 We look to the signs of a new world  
 We live out the signs of this new world.

Our Service has ended  
 Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ***

**Leaving in Celebration: You shall go out with joy** (TiS 755, Trees of the Field, Steffi Greiser Rubin)

**Musical Postlude**

**Pianist**

Rosemary Osborne



### Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
 That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
 And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
 And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
 The work of hunters is another thing:  
 I have come after them and made repair  
 Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
 But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
 To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
 No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
 But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
 I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;  
 And on a day we meet to walk the line  
 And set the wall between us once again.  
 We keep the wall between us as we go.  
 To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
 And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
 "Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"  
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
 Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
 One on a side. It comes to little more:  
 There where it is we do not need the wall:  
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
 My apple trees will never get across  
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
 He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

