

## **SEEING THE DIFFERENCE WITH A WALL COMING DOWN**

**Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mark 15: 37-38).**

I WAS REMINDED A FEW DAYS AGO THAT June 13, 2020 will mark the 30th anniversary of work officially beginning on the destruction of the Berlin Wall. Even though the process had begun 7 months earlier on November 9, 1989, it was not until June 13, 1990 that the destruction of the wall was officially begun. The Berlin Wall was built in 1961 to prevent East Germans from fleeing to freedom in West Berlin. The wall became a symbol or iconic image of the Cold War era. Hundreds of people were killed or wounded trying to go over, under or around the wall to escape communism.

I spent four months in West Germany in 1985 as a foreign exchange student. Some of the students I was studying with contemplated traveling to West Berlin so they could see the Berlin Wall firsthand. I still recall my teacher warning these students:

***Do not drive into East Germany. The police will be checking and watching you closely. If you do go you are better to fly into West Berlin. Do not cross any of the border crossings into East Berlin. It is not safe.***

The teacher's message was one of fear strongly encouraging them not to go. Having lived in West Germany in 1985 I can confirm there were a lot of fears being there in the Cold War Era. I returned to Germany in 1996 with Nadine six years after the Berlin Wall came down. I didn't visit Berlin in 1985 due to the risks of doing so. It was so much easier for me to visit Berlin in 1996. Nadine and I took a train from Hamburg, Germany to Berlin. Once we arrived in the city we crossed easily and freely into the former East Berlin through the Brandenburg Gate and came back via the former Check Point Charlie. There were still a few sections of the Berlin Wall up for tourists to see and take pictures by but the rest of the wall was down. The Berlin Wall that was such a symbol of fear in 1985 was now history.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who grew up in East Germany recently said:

***“No wall that keeps people out and restricts freedom is so high and so wide that it can’t be broken down.”***

On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down we are hopefully seeing another wall coming down – the wall of racism. Sadly, racism has restricted certain ethnic groups from experiencing some freedoms throughout the centuries. While we have seen cracks forming in these walls in more recent times, incidents of racism still appear as seen with the death of George Floyd. People are rightly protesting and demanding that these walls of racist prejudice toward others start coming down.

Some people say that these walls will never come down. One person thought that with respect to the Berlin Wall. Just a year before the Berlin Wall started to come down the East German leader Erich Honecker stated boldly that the wall would be standing 50 and even 100 years from now calling it an “anti-fascist protection barrier”. Less than a year after he said that, the wall came down. Let us hope and pray that the walls of racism and prejudice toward others will start coming down now. If they do, I pray that people will experience what I did in 1996 visiting the site of the Berlin Wall, freely and without fear enjoying the pleasures that this world has to offer with others.

Small sections of the Berlin Wall still stand today. Sadly, there will always be small sections of racism and prejudice in this world. Let’s hope with God’s help the big walls of bias and prejudice come down on this 30th anniversary of the Berlin Wall. God brought down the wall of sin that separated us from Him and eternal life. God made that known when He tore the curtain at the Temple from top to bottom after Jesus died on the cross. Let’s do our part in praying and asking God to tear the wall of racism down too.

Blessings,

Rev. Dean