

**A Sermon preached by the Right Revd Dr
Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry, on
the occasion of the Funeral of Fusilier Shaun
Bush**

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL 23RD SEPTEMBER 2009

Fusilier Shaun Bush
Revelation 21. 1-7

It is a great honour to preach at the funeral of a young man who died serving his country - a brilliant sportsman, a devoted son and brother and friend, a person full of humour and love - a dedicated soldier, mortally wounded in a great act of bravery going to the aid of his Platoon Sergeant.

I stand before you, Shaun's family and friends, especially Amy, and his colleagues, as a British subject, thankful for his readiness to risk his life for a safer, better world.

And I stand before you as a citizen of Coventry, proud of one of our finest men.

But most of all, I stand with you, Shaun's family and loved ones, as a father. One of my own sons is the same age as Shaun and I do not know how I would bear the loss that you have been asked to suffer.

I stand with you in this place in our city which was ruined by war, looking out on the old Cathedral, a permanent reminder of the wreckage of war.

Today – on this day of the funeral of a young man with so much life and love ahead of him – our hearts are worn and torn by the deadly damage of war as our parents and grandparents were in November 1940 when the Cathedral collapsed and the city burned and the water to quench the fires ran dry.

And yet we gather in a city and in a Cathedral that would not let war have the last word but would speak out a more powerful word of hope for the future.

A city and Cathedral that would not let itself be ruined by war but would rebuild itself by faith because life is stronger than death.

A new Cathedral that would tell the story in stone and concrete that although Jesus Christ died at the hands of evil men he was raised to life again by the God whose invincible power of love and goodness overcomes the forces of hate and evil.

We have just heard Jesus' words in our reading from the Bible: 'See I am making all things new'.

How did they believe that in their day? How do we believe it in ours? We can only believe it because Jesus Christ faced the forces of evil and faced them down and showed us that peace must be built on true foundations.

In the rubble of the ruined Cathedral someone was heard to say to a young service man,

'Please God, you will avenge what was done to us this night'.

But there was another word spoken that day, the shocking words of Jesus hanging from the cross: 'Father forgive':

Forgive the world for getting itself into the mess where these terrible human tragedies happen, where cities are burned and the lives of men and women, young and old from every race are hung up (like Jesus) and blown up (like Shaun).

When we join with Jesus in crying for God's healing of the world, we can join with him in building the better world for which he died – and for which Shaun so courageously gave his own life in his prime.

To you, Shaun's family and to Amy, we say thank you. Thank you for your son and brother and beloved. For all the love and life you gave to him.

I pray that you will know the presence of Jesus Christ who makes all things new and brings life out of death and strength for a new day out of the pain of this day.

To you, his regiment, may we say we do not want you to avenge his death with revenge in your hearts, for as your regimental motto says, 'Evil be who evil thinks'. We dare simply to ask that you follow his brave example and labour in your dangerous fields for the fruit of a better future for all human kind, and when you are called to fight, to fight for peace for everyone.

To our Government, amidst all the unenviable dilemmas and complex decisions you face, we ask you to remember always that your duty to this nation and to all the nations of the earth is to wage war only to the extent that is necessary to build a peace that will last. We ask you out of respect for Shaun's sacrifice, and the ultimate price he – and his other Fusilier colleagues - was asked to pay, to do all in your powers to build a lasting peace by helping the nation that has become a theatre of war to reconstruct itself into a place of peace and prosperity where all its children – young and old – can thrive in their schools and homes, villages and cities.

And let the inspiration of all of us be the vision of the last book of the Bible read today at the funeral of Fusilier Shaun Bush: the vision of a world where mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the former things have passed away.