

## **Sermon at the ordination and installation of Richard Condie as Bishop of Tasmania on 19th March 2016.**

**Peter Adam**

**We are here to pray. This is a prayer meeting. We are here to pray for you Richard, because for those who are members of the Anglican tribe in Tasmania, you are becoming our Bishop, and we owe you a warm welcome and our prayers for you this and every day. We are here to pray for you, because for some of us we are welcoming you to the Tasmanian community. We are here to pray for you, because some of us are your family and your friends. And we are here to pray for you, because we belong to the Anglican Church of Australia, and recognise you as a valued friend and colleague in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**Possibly the most powerful thing any of us will do today is to pray for you. Because our powerful and gracious heavenly Father is always ready to hear and answer our prayers, and to use them powerfully by his grace and kindness. As we pray for you today, we will pray that God, who has made you in his image, will continue to transform you into the image of his Son, the glorious Lord Jesus Christ. We will pray that God will give you gifts and energy and love and wisdom for ministry. We will pray that God blessings in Christ will fill you, so that you in turn bring his blessings to many people, throughout the years of your ministry in this role. So God will use the prayers we pray today, to bless countless people throughout your ministry in Tasmania, and beyond.**

**If you are used to praying, then today please pray fervently, please approach God with confidence through the Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest, please pray with faith, trusting God to hear and answer every prayer prayed by every person in this building today. If you are not used to praying to God, then please use the words written in the service for your prayers, and trust that God is always more ready to hear our prayers than we are to pray, and that he covers the weakness of our prayers with power of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. And our prayers today will reach their climax in the prayer during which our Primate lays his hands on Richard's head, and prays the actual prayer of ordination. We are here to pray. And God will answer our prayers.**

**But Richard, at this point, you are here to listen, and what fun it is to be able to preach to you, when you are not allowed to interrupt, object, or walk out! It is a rare and thoroughly enjoyable treat, and one which I treasure very deeply. And perhaps others present will also enefit from what I am saying to you today.**

**I am going to preach to you from Paul's second letter to Timothy, which Helen read today in our service. Would you please find it on page 7 of the booklet. We begin at verse 14.**

<sup>14</sup>*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>16</sup>*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness <sup>7</sup>so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup>proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.*

I want to remind you of three lessons from this section of Paul's letter.

1. The message of the Bible in the Old Testament as also, by the way, in the New Testament, has the power to instruct people for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

We are ignorant of God, and we need to know.

We need to know, so we need God's book, the Bible, to teach us.

We need salvation, rescue from our own sins against God and against others, rescue from God's judgment of our sins, and rescue from the power of our sins to damage us, and damage others.

We only find this salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, sent by God to rescue us and bring us home to God.

Biography of Daniel Wilson, Calcutta, 1832-58 India [incl Pakistan], Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], Burma [now Myanmar], Malaysia and Singapore and Australia that is Sydney and Tasmania [then Van Diemens land] until 1836 when Bishop Broughton became Bishop of Australia [with Nixon becoming the first Bishop of Tasmania in 1842].

'Do not be afraid of distinguishing in your own mind ...what is preaching the Gospel and what it not. There is one way to heaven, and but one. He that points out that way, preaches the Gospel; and he that does not, preaches not the Gospel, whatever else he may preach,'

The message of the Bible in the Old Testament as also, by the way, in the New Testament, has the power to instruct people for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. The Bible Old Testament and New Testament is inspired by God and so powerful to train us for the tasks of ministry. So we read in verse <sup>16</sup>All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness <sup>7</sup>so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

As a matter of fact, the focus of this verse is not so much 'everyone who belongs to God', as it is the Christian leader, as, for example, you, Richard.

How will you be equipped for every good work you have to do as Bishop of Tasmania? By the Bible.

And what are those works? Well we will hear a summary of them later in this service. Please turn to p. 14,

- Maintain the Church's witness to the resurrection of Christ from the dead
- Protect the purity of the gospel
- Proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord
- Guard the faith, unity and discipline of Christ's church
- Promote its mission in the world.
- Ensure that God's word is faithfully proclaimed, and his sacraments duly ministered
- Lead and guide the priests and deacons under your care
- Be faithful in choosing and ordaining ministers
- Watch over, guard, protect and serve God's people,
- Teach and govern them, and be hospitable
- You must know and be known by them, and a good example to all

And we could add more:

Be a tribal chief to Anglicans.

Be a spokesperson in the media.

Contribute to the welfare of the Tasmanian community.

Do the work of an evangelist.

Keep your head in all situations.

Encourage others to use their gifts.

Be an effective leader.

Be a competent administrator.

How will you be equipped for every good work you have to do as Bishop of Tasmania? By the Bible.

Your ministry will certainly be wide! It must also be deep, and continuing depth only comes from the Bible and from prayer.

3. Then you have to preach the word, using the powerful Bible as your tool of ministry, and with lots of teaching and lots of patience.

Back to page 7.

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup>proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.*

Use the Bible, because of the power of the Bible to show people the way to God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Use the Bible, because of the power of the Bible makes it useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness <sup>7</sup>so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

And how will you use the Bible?

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup>proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.*

This charge is given in the presence of God, and in the light of the judgement of God. In words of French spiritual writer addressed to a Bishop on the day of his ordination, and quoted by Daniel Wilson, 'On the day of congratulation, remember the day of examination'. You are not here to please people, you are here to please God in all that you do.

As Paul says elsewhere in 2 Timothy, 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth' [2:15].

Bible and the Bible alone as the instrument of ministry entrusted to you at the moment of your consecration or ordination as bishop. Not an empty ritual.

Your special robes, your Pastoral staff and a cross, they are reminders to you, and to us, of your weighty responsibilities.

But the Bible is your instrument of ministry, the powerful means God has provided for you to preach the gospel and train people in God's service. It is given to you: use it!

A Bishop without a Bible is no Bishop at all, according to this service.

And it is not enough to use the Bible in the liturgy, if you don't preach from it.

It is not enough to have learnt the message of the Bible, and not continue to study and learn from it. It should be a book which is old, but always new; familiar but always strange; known, but always giving us new and deeper revelations of God and his ways.

And it must be in every part of your life, and in every decision you make, and in every act of ministry, including preaching, teaching, training, counselling, warning, encouraging,

comforting, and telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ, and calling on them to turn to him in faith and obedience.

**The Bible must be in your liturgy, in your life, and on your lips.**

**The Bible must be in your mind, in your memory, in your meditation, and in your ministry.**

**A Bishop without a Bible is no Bishop at all.**

**Strong words? Actually, I have just been explaining some of the questions you will soon be asked in this service;**

**Are you convinced the holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Will you instruct from them the people committed to your care, teaching mothering as essential to salvation which cannot be demonstrated from the Scriptures?**

**I am convinced, and will do so, with God's help.**

**Will you then be faithful in prayer, and diligent in the study of the Scripture, so that you may be equipped to teach and encourage with sound doctrine?**

**I will, seeking to discern the mind of Christ by the Spirit of God**

**Will you proclaim the gospel to all, especially those among whom you live? Will you lead those in your care to obey our Saviour's command to make disciples of all nations?**

**I will, gladly bearing witness to Christ in the power of God**

**And I have just been explaining and filling out the words the Primate will say to you, as he gives you the Bible, as the instrument of your episcopal ministry:**

**Richard receive this Bible, study it well, and expound its teaching. In it are contained the words of eternal life. Take them for your rule, and declare them to the world.**

**The Bible must be in your mind, in your memory, in your decisions, in your private life in your public life, on your lips, in your conversation, and in all of your ministry.**

**This service of the ordination of a Bishop has so much focus on the Bible as the source of all true knowledge of God, as the source of the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and as the chief instrument of Christian ministry because it is based on the Reformation Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, who worked on providing services which were Biblical in content and aim.**

*These books, therefore, ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all in our hearts. The words of Holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life (John 6): for they be God's instrument, ordained for the same purpose<sup>1</sup>.*

*For the Scripture of God is heavenly meat of our souls: the hearing and keeping of it maketh us blessed, sanctifieth us, and maketh us holy; it turneth our souls; it is a light lantern to our feet; it is a sure, stedfast, and everlasting instrument of salvation; it giveth wisdom to the humble and lowly hearts; it comforteth, maketh glad, cheereth, and cherisheth our conscience; it is a more excellent jewel, or treasure, than any gold or precious stone; it is more sweet than honey or honeycomb; it is called the best part, which Mary did choose; for it hath in it everlasting comfort.<sup>2</sup>*

In the great Cranmer scholar Ashley Null's powerful words, in Cranmer's mind, the Scriptures 'tell, turn, and tether'.<sup>3</sup> They tell us of God, they turn us to God, and they tether us to God.

*And there is nothing that so much strengtheneth our faith and trust in God, that so much keepeth up innocency and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and recording of God's word. For that thing, which by continual use of reading of Holy Scripture, and diligent searching of the same, is deeply printed and graven in the heart, at length turneth almost into nature.<sup>4</sup>*

Cranmer knew that we need 'the pure word of God' in our services and in our lives.

Questions I will ask you at regular intervals for the rest of your ministry.

- Do you still trust the Scriptures?
- Are you still studying the Scriptures, and learning at ever deeper levels as you study?
- How long is it since your reading of the Scriptures changed the way you live or do your ministry?
- Are you using the Scriptures in your preaching, not merely as a launching pad for the rocket of your own ideas, but as the substance, content and purpose of your preaching and for the substance of your application?
- Are you using the Scriptures in all other parts of your ministry: in counselling, evangelism, in pastoral conversations, and as the guide to your leadership and wider ministries?

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<sup>1</sup> Homily, 'Reading of Holy Scripture'. Although the Homilies were published anonymously, it was Cranmer who was responsible for them. It is likely that he was the author of this Homily, as also of Homilies 3, 5, and 6 in this First Book of Homilies. RS Bond, pp. 26-31. '

<sup>2</sup> Homily, 'Reading of Holy Scripture'.

<sup>3</sup> Ashley Null, 'Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way of Reading Scripture.

<sup>4</sup> Homily, 'Reading of Holy Scripture'.

- Are you giving God the microphone in your teaching and preaching, by projecting God's eloquent words in the Bible?

For Richard the great danger you face is that your increased quantity and level of responsibilities will lead to such a busy life, that the time you are able to commit to prayer and the ministry of the word will suffer. Like the apostles in Acts 6, you need to ensure that you have time for prayer and the ministry of the word, both in preparation and in presentation. Otherwise you will have a ministry which is 'a thousand miles wide, but only an inch deep'. Only prayer and the Bible can deepen your ministry.

In the words of Daniel Wilson's friend and supporter, the great English preacher Charles Simeon: 'My endeavour is to bring out Scripture what is there, and not thrust into it what I think might be there. I have a great jealousy on this head never to speak more or less than I believe to be the mind of the Spirit in the passage I am expounding'.<sup>5</sup>

I wonder if you know of the famous character in ancient Greek mythology, whose name was Procrustes. He was an innkeeper, and had a famous bed in his inn, which he boasted was wonderful bed, which would be comfortable for anyone to sleep on.

What actually happened to hapless travellers, attracted to the inn and the bed, was that Procrustes would ensure that they fitted the bed, either by cutting off their legs if the bed was too short, or by stretching their bodies on a rack, if the bed was too long.

We preach Procrustean sermons when we crowd out the 'first text', that is the Bible, by using a 'second text', which may be our own ideas, or popular psychology, or the latest ideas about leadership, or the most recent book we read...

I am sorry to say that it is very easy to preach Procrustean sermons, in which the Bible is either cut short to fit what the sermon is about, or stretched beyond its natural meaning, to fit the mind of the preacher.

The most common way in which is done today, is to say, 'Well, this Bible passage reminds me of something Hildegard of Bingen said, or 'This reminds me of a comment of Tim Keller'. The Bible is then left behind, having been used as a mere launching pad for the preachers own agenda. When the Bible is preached as it is, God's voice is heard in the Bible reading and the sermon. For, as Christ said, quoting the Old Testament,

'It is written, "We do not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"' [Matthew 4:4].

Well Richard, All obvious? yes. All elementary? yes. All clearly taught in the Bible? yes. All clearly expressed in this service? yes. But, as a friend of mine often says, 'It goes without saying, so it needs to be said.'

**Let the Bible, not your diary, rule your life.**

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Simeon, *Evangelical Preaching: An anthology of sermons by Charles Simeon*, an introduction by John R.W. Stott, Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon, 1986, p. xxxiii

What we hear shapes our lives, so we are indeed blessed if our 'delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law [we] meditate day and night'<sup>6</sup>. For individually and corporately, 'we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'<sup>7</sup>.

Well Richard, I pray that wonderful miracles of our Old Testament reading, Ezra chapter 8 happen again and again in Tasmania during and through your ministry.

- God's people wanted to hear God's words
- Ezra was well trained to teach them God's words, for as we read elsewhere, he had devoted himself to study, do and teach the word of God.
- When Ezra opened the Bible, everyone stood up, because they knew they were in the presence of God, as God spoke to them from the Bible.
- Ezra's assistants helped the people to understand the Bible.
- The people rejoiced because they had understood God's words.
- And they responded with tears and joy.

The venerable Bede, an early English Bible commentator, applied the ministry of Ezra to the Bishop of Rome. I want to apply it to the Bishop of Tasmania!

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Richard, may you be able to say with St Paul, as you end your ministry,

**<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,**

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 1:2

<sup>7</sup> Based on Matthew 4:4.

**will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. ‘**

**Richard,  
May God be in your head, and in your understanding  
May God be in your eyes, and in your looking  
May God be in your mouth, and in your speaking,  
May God be at your end, and at your departing.**

**May God in his mercy sustain you in these priorities until your life’s end, for Christ’s sake.  
Amen.**