

â??Seek the welfare of the place where God has put usâ??

The Archbishop of Canterbury preached at a special service to a packed St Peterâ??s Cathedral on Sunday. Here is a text of his sermon.

First of all I join in the acknowledgement that we worship on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people, and we acknowledge and pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge with thanks the invitations of Archbishop Geoff to speak with you today on this extraordinary occasion, and Dean Chris for the courtesy of his pulpit.

We are so accustomed to know everything that is happening instantly. Itâ??s extraordinary how quickly weâ??ve got used to it â?? what we used to wait months to hear we now hear in seconds if itâ??s of great importance, or minutes if itâ??s of less importance: like what an Archbishop has said in a pulpit in Adelaide.

That sense of speed blinds us, takes away our understanding and our empathy with what it meant to come out here 175 years ago and to plant a church.

Bishop Augustus Short was consecrated in Westminster Abbey in London as the first Bishop of Adelaide on the 29th June, 1847 â?? St Peterâ??s Day. Two months later he set sail for Adelaide with his wife Millicent. They had five children, an entourage of governesses, servants, and clergymen. One wonders what the governesses and servants thought about this. Had they been given a choice, or were

they simply told this is whatâ??s happening? But letâ??s pass on that one. It says they had volunteered. I think itâ??s the clergy who volunteered to come here with.

And after a grueling journey at sea, he arrived for his installation as Bishop of Adelaide in December of 1847. And he read from Psalm 107, my favorite Psalm, as it happens, â??so he bringeth them to the haven where they would beâ?•. God is faithful. God is faithful. He planted a church where there was not a church. He built, he settled, he worked, he served. And today, here we are in this cathedral, the main body of which was finished in 1901 and the towers in 1902, 120 years ago, 55 years after he arrived. And that is a testimony to Godâ??s faithfulness.

Governor Frances Adamson greeted at St Peterâ??s by the Dean, Bishop Chris McLeod, Archbishop of Adelaide, Geoff Smith, and the Archbishop of Canterbury

Go back before that, a little over two and a half thousand years, and we come to the time of Jeremiah and to the passage that was read to us in the first lesson. The exiles in Babylon, three months of a death march, walked away from the city from which theyâ??ve been taken after its siege and destruction. And we are learning afresh what to lay siege to somewhere means in our day. Three monthsâ?? death march, and they arrived in the slave labor camps outside Babylon, fever-ridden, frightening, strange. And they write to the great prophet who they realized had been right, correct, when he had prophesied the fall of Jerusalem. Theyâ??d held him in contempt. Theyâ??d thrown him in pits. They had bullied him and persecuted him. Theyâ??d chased him from the temple. But he was right, and now they know it.

And so they write to him and they say, â??How long are we going to be here? What should we do?â?• For the first time, when it was far too late, they turned to him and said, â??Help.â?•

And he writes back in his normal cheerful manner. If you read the book of Jeremiah, you sense the irony. He writes back, â??Dear exiles, donâ??t rush about. Youâ??re going to be there for a very, very long time.â?• Actually, he says elsewhere 70 years, which was, not coincidentally, a lifetime. So he said, â??Youâ??re going to be there for life. You are going to be there, so settle down, take wives, have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons. Give your daughters in marriage, etc., etc. Multiply there and do not decrease, but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile.â?• They thought Nebuchadnezzar had taken them into exile, and God says, â??Donâ??t forget that I was using Nebuchadnezzar. I did that to you because you deserved it.â?• â??And pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare, you will find your welfare.â?• And indeed, 70 years or so later, they began to be able to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

The choir prepares to process into the church

Augustus Short knew that God was faithful. That is the first thing we take in looking back after 175 years. We are, as Christians, wherever we are, at home or in exile, in prosperity or poverty, in joy or sadness, we are to seek the welfare of the place where God has put us.

And we think immediately of Adelaide. But praise God, over recent years, generational war that in this land it has begun to be recognized. And Iâ??m deeply challenged by this, by the example that everything rests on land that belonged to someone else. And to seek the welfare of this land is, as you know and as Bishop Chris said in his acknowledgement, to begin to seek for reconciliation, to begin to seek for the prosperity and the flourishing of every inhabitant of the land, especially those whoâ??ve been here for 60,000 years. It is a huge challenge, as great a challenge as that faced by the exiles. As hard a challenge. And all the acknowledgements, all the prayers that are said, are either words, or

theyâ??re words with weight. And what puts weight into words is action. What puts weight into words is being willing to change.

Seek the welfare of the city. Seek the welfare of the country. Of country â?? take away the article. Seek the welfare of Adelaide. North, in its suburbs; east, where the suburbs are perhaps more prosperous. Seek the welfare of this land.

Itâ??s not for nothing that in England, Australia is called the lucky country. There is so much here. You see it at every stage. You see it when you go to Perth Airport, as we did. Thank you for the scheduling of this for a 5:30 AM flight. And I watched the departures board as aircraft departed for the mines every five minutes.

The welfare of the land. The welfare of a land that is so rich, so overwhelmingly beautiful, so gloriously endowed, so well cared for over 60,000 years. What does it mean to seek the welfare of the land? Because God is faithful. God is faithful to what he said. God is faithful to his promises. Over recent years in England, amidst church decline, we have sought the welfare in the church of the land where we are, as Christians, through many things, but among them is what Augustus Short did: church planting.

There is a big church in London which I know quite well. I wonâ??t go into the details. And its minister came to see me nine years ago and said, â??What can we do to help?â?• And I said, â??Plant a church that will be generous and bless the place where it is in every diocese.â?• And theyâ??ve more or less done it over the subsequent nine years. They send a group of people who sell their houses, move their childrenâ??s school, exactly like Short, go to a place they do not know, find new jobs, find new ways of living. They send them with a couple of clergy, some money, and an administrator, and they start a church. Thereâ??s very little difference to what Augustus Short did, except itâ??s easy to get back and the journey is not three months. But to move your whole household and your job, that is commitment. That is discipleship.

And the aims of these churches is to bless the diocese they go to, to bring resources, to enable those diocese to find hope and strength, and to bless the communities in which they live, to transform society, and to bring people to faith in Christ.

For 175 years, the impact of Bishop Shortâ??s extraordinary courage and those with him, volunteers or not, has been seen in the development and the life of the diocese of Adelaide, and in fact far, far wider. For when he planted, he covered a slightly larger area, as far north as Darwin and as far west as Perth. Well, his travel must have been something. And we can join with the psalmist today in Psalm 66 and say, â??How awesome are your deedsâ?• to God, for God is faithful. â??Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.â?•

But we are not just those who serve the faithful God. We are those who are a people of the purpose. Itâ??s a purpose so radical that its nature is often obscured by the everyday struggle to put it into practice. What does it mean to bless the land with all its inhabitants, including those who are First Nations, who are the indigenous people? It is an aspiration so enormous that it is tempting for it to be satisfied by sentences at the beginning of secular and religious ceremonies. But that is not the purpose

of the people of God.

Look at the second reading from 2 Timothy. Paul was seeking to convert the Roman Empire, the superpower of its day, city by city. And he sets out in his letter to Timothy that this is something that must dominate the life of those who, in those struggling days, called themselves Christians. And then thereâ??s a slight shock, because he says, â??This is my gospel for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal.â?•

The psalm goes on to say, â??You brought us into the net.â?• You, God, brought us into the net. â??You laid burdens on our backs.â?• The blessing of a land, the blessing of its inhabitants, the seeking the welfare of the place where God has placed us, comes down to the absolutely normal day to day of the places we went to yesterday with Anglicare. It means that someone has to work with young people coming out of care, and with all the discouragements and irritations and frustrations, enable them to find a job and a purpose. It means that the issues that have led to so much dysfunction amongst indigenous people have to be tackled one by one.

Archbishop Welby has a moment for the Sunday school children as he prepares to preach

Words donâ??t do it; it is actions in love. It means that the everyday life of a church, of a diocese, accounts of mission action plans, of setting up services, of practicing as a choir, of reading the Bible, of dealing with arguments between people who, if they were sensible, would see theyâ??re arguing over very little. By the way, nothing new. â??Donâ??t begin to hassle about words,â?• says Paul; thatâ??s the Welby translation. It comes in the last paragraph. â??Warn them before God they are to avoid wrangling over words. Stop it,â?• he says. Does no good; only ruins those who are listening. We know all about that. All that is the day to day.

The day after the late Her Majestyâ??s funeral, which was an extraordinary moment of grandeur and terror for some people, I think, and lots of other things, and in which you were escorted everywhere by

troops and by police and outriders and all this sort of thing. The day after, the Archbishop of York and I found ourselves in a meeting discussing how we appoint bishops over the next four or five years, and what kind of bishops we want. It was six hours of quite detailed, down to earth work. It was quite coming down with a bump, because it came into the reality of day to day.

Paul says to Timothy, â??Youâ??re a people of purpose, so act like it.â?• And that does mean the day to day. There are two words in the New Testament used for work, and youâ??ll find them particularly in 1 Corinthians 15:58. One of them is *ergon* We get words in English like ergometer from it, which is the great works of power. Itâ??s establishing dioceses, planting churches, leading people to faith in Christ, setting up great organizations like Anglicare. Itâ??s those things, those things that are just big and exciting.

And then Paul says in the same verse, â??Do all that, but donâ??t forget the other thing, the *kopos*,â?• which is a Greek word meaning toil and labor. Thatâ??s moving the chairs. Thatâ??s cleaning the robes. Thatâ??s organizing this, that, and the other in reaching out. Thatâ??s making sure thereâ??s a working sound system. Itâ??s the day to day, the boring stuff. And Paul, when he says weâ??re a people of purpose, when he says that to Timothy, he is saying both those things. Heâ??s saying they both happen. Theyâ??re part of it.

Augustus Short arrived after 175 years. He had to build a house and a church. That wouldâ??ve meant getting stones, getting wood, cutting it, hitting your finger with a hammer and jumping around, probably cursing in 19th-century English, and so on and so forth. It wouldâ??ve meant all the inconveniences. Weâ??re a people of purpose. Life is lived in the daily, in the mundane, in the usual. Donâ??t let it obscure the faithfulness of God, because when itâ??s done well, it leads 175 years later to great diocese in a great nation.

And lastly, we are in a kingdom. No, not that one. Iâ??m not making any Australian [inaudible 00:18:24] about the royal family and making republics. Nothing to do with that. We are in the kingdom of God. We are in a kingdom without frontiers.

Adelaide Clergy join the Archbishop of Canterbury for photograph

Look at the gospel reading. Have you noticed who the 10th man was, the 10th leper? He was a Samaritan. And what a disaster. A Samaritan was ethnic minority, excluded from normal life. A leper was everything of that and 100 times more, so excluded that nobody could come near. And when he went to the priest, it was quite likely the priest would say, â??Sorry. If youâ??re not one of us, youâ??re one of them. Of course Iâ??m not going to give you a certificate saying youâ??re cleansed.â?• The other nine could go. But it says here in the gospel reading that when he saw that he was healed, he turned back before he got to the priest and went to Jesus, the source of his healing.

It is all the grace of God. All thatâ??s happened in 175 years. It is all Godâ??s love without expectation of return. Grace. And I wonder what the disciples thought when they heard Jesus. They wouldnâ??t like the man; he was a Samaritan, traditional enemy. But go up, for Jesus says, â??This is the one who will

follow me.â?• He jumps the barriers that we set up. He includes those we exclude. He doesnâ??t give him a catechism, a question and answer session to see if his doctrine of the incarnation is good, or his morals are excellent, or his understanding of the second coming is proper. He says, â??Your faith has made you well.â?• And the word there means whole, entire. Not just free of leprosy, but spiritually whole, as well.

An opportunity after the service for men and women of the Diocese to meet and chat with Archbishop Welby

And so as time goes on, a kingdom without frontiers, because the king sees no frontiers, and leaps them and draws people in. And itâ??s up to the church to say, are those the kind of people we want simply because God thinks they are, or to say, â??Welcome. You come as one of us because you seek to follow Christ.â?• Itâ??s the only qualification for being in the church: that we follow Christ. And so we

look, in the church, for the unlikely alliances and supporters. We look for ways in which we see God leaping the boundaries, and we draw those who, because of that, have turned to find out who this Lord is who is reaching out to them, often without them even knowing itâ??s God.

I come back to mission action manager, to the boring bit. Itâ??s not, actually; itâ??s rather fun. But Iâ??m always accused of supporting it and being a bureaucrat, managerial. Planning in the church does not determine the future; God determines the future. But it trains our eyesight to see what God is doing and to join in with God. That is beautiful.This is a church plant that is 175 years old, planted by an obedient servant of a faithful God to bring about people with a purpose of transforming society in a kingdom that has no frontiers unless we put them in place. May God bless this diocese of Adelaide, strengthen it, continue to expand its frontiers, enable it to see what God is doing in society and welcome those whose spirit is brought in love and made whole by his life.

Amen.

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