

1500

EMBARGOED

~~1500~~ hours SUNDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER, 1986.

## PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Church House, Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3NZ. Telephone: 01-222 9011

A SERMON PREACHED BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, DR. ROBERT RUNCIE, AT A CONCELEBRATED EUCHARIST HELD IN THE GOODWOOD STADIUM, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, ON SUNDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 1986.

Peace be with you - from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is good for us to be here. It is good to share with you in this Eucharist of Celebration. I am here as your guest, with many others, to represent the Anglican Communion on this historic day. That's a reminder to us that we are part of one worldwide Church. When one part rejoices, we all rejoice. When one part suffers, we all suffer. Along with us are many from other religious traditions. The things which unite us are greater than anything which divides us. We want you to know that we are with you today, and will stand by you in future. That is why we are here.

All the world is watching and listening. Our friends everywhere are praying for us as now Desmond Tutu becomes Archbishop of Cape Town - the first to come from the black people who form the majority of this Province.

We know him to be a man of God. He has stayed in my home, so I know he gets up earlier than I do to say his prayers. He is a man of the people. You have freely elected him. He has not been imposed on you. You have a Xhosa proverb: "UMFUNDISI NGUMFUNDISI NGABANTU" ("A priest is only a priest through his people"). His laughter and spontaneity can sometimes upset the pompous and shock the solemn. As they said of Jesus, "He doesn't speak like a religious official".

practicing  
that ✓ sk.

Desmond is a man of love, vision and peace, whose valiant stand for Christ has brought such life and hope to South Africa, and far beyond. I believe you have a leader chosen by God, to transcend the honest differences of the people of this Province from the Cape to the northern borders of Namibia and Mozambique. Hold him and his wife Leah in your prayers.

I

I come not simply to pay a tribute to a friend, not only to encourage him with the massive support he has from the international community - certainly not to give him advice. I come to preach the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus Christ) because it brings a shaft of light into our troubled times. You have just heard the Easter story. It tells of a God who, when human possibilities are exhausted, acts beyond our hoping and gives beyond our asking.

Consider that moving little sentence in the story: "Mary Magdalene stood at the tomb weeping".

All of us here today who rejoice at this magnificent service know too the tears which Mary wept. Hers was a sorrow that weighs down our hearts too - the sorrow of bereavement, bewilderment, even despair.

Mary had known the suffering that many among her people, perhaps as always the women most of all, had to bear. She had shared in their oppression - oppression which then, as now, carries its victims into exile or captivity. Husbands separated from wives, children taken from parents. Mary knew the pressure of poverty. She endured the agony of injustice which cuts people off from each other, and makes slaves of them.

And Mary's hopes had been raised so high, just as ours can be. Jesus came moving amongst His people with words of wisdom and acts of love, setting their hearts alight with power to heal and restore. He brought promise of a new freedom, which the Old Testament prophets had long foretold. He offered a different kind of life. Before His authority, police, soldiers and rulers seemed confused.

We have seen in our day, and all over the world, those imprisoned for their loyalty to truth who stand out as He did with courage and dignity. They win the reluctant respect of their captors. They are free of fear or guilt, free of hatred or bitterness. They become the real judges of the world.

What terrible sorrow and void there is when such a light as this seems to be extinguished, crushed, destroyed. Death and darkness smother the last glimmer of hope. Only despair remains. With such despair, Mary wept. And we weep with her.

But even in such moments of darkness (when we seemed blinded by tears) the wondrous light which broke in upon Mary with the first dawn of that new day breaks upon us now.

At first there was just the stirring of people somewhere far off. Figures in white were speaking to her. Beside the tomb a gardener was asking what was wrong, trying to bring comfort.

Then came the voice - strange yet somehow familiar. A voice you never seemed to have heard before and yet have always known, a voice that calls you by your name: "Mary!" All at once she recognised that presence. This is no stranger's voice. "Rabboni! Master!" "I have seen the Lord", she told the disciples.

II

The theme of death and resurrection lies deep in human experience. Not only in our own lives; but in the lives of the nations. Here in South Africa an old order is dying. As we watch, we experience all the agony, doubt and uncertainty which surround death. But if we have faith, we know that beyond death lies the assurance of resurrection.

We can see now that Jesus has brought to us all the power in faith to lay down our life, so that it can be taken up again. Trusting in Him alone we can surrender our lives, to find ourselves afresh. A new freedom is released in the midst of this world, the power of God that can never be suppressed. This is the heart of our Gospel.

We must be ready now, at this moment in human history, confronted anew by the same true and living Christ, to surrender ourselves. That means those who hold power in this world must be ready to renounce it for the sake of Christ. And, in the same way, those who seek power, must be ready, even after all they have suffered, to make room for the claims of people they've seen as oppressors. Those who fear for their safety or for their rights must be ready to risk all for His sake. Those of us in the West who have done much to create this present tragic situation here must be ready to repent and change and make sacrifices. I want you to know I believe this is happening and all our churches long to know how we can help.

I come to tell you in their name and in the name of Christ that we support you in your struggle to create a united South Africa out of the divisive forces which hold you in their grip. But I do not want to speak smooth words of peace where there is no peace.

Applause

A person precariously balanced on top of a pile of logs is aware of the hurt that will be done if it collapses. Not surprisingly he calls for stability, for change that is gentle.

A person who is squeezed under the pile of logs is conscious of his present pain. He calls out to be freed, even if it brings down the whole pile.

But I do believe this. As no system based on brutal repression can endure so no change achieved by violence can escape its damaging infection. These are the lessons of history. They are the message of the Cross.

We must grieve over all victims of violence and cruelty. But the Church must not be owned, possessed, or manipulated either to bolster up a system which is unChristian, or to serve a political ideology which leaves out God.

The Risen Christ wills us to go and tell our brothers and sisters the truth of His Lordship through self-giving, to show his life through death.

He opens up before us the new relationship with God and with each other into which He would draw us all. He would bring each and all of us into His new Kingdom-Community in the Spirit, where there is no room for greed or possessiveness, where perfect love casts out fear.

The only way is a way of painful repentance and costly love. There are no short cuts.

But once take that way of the Cross and beyond it lies a vision of a new heaven and a new earth - a Kingdom into which can come all the nations of this world, yes, all this beautiful South Africa with its rich human and material resources.

Handwritten scribbles at the bottom of the page, including the number "400" and a large "7" with a diagonal slash.

Our witness must be to that Christ who is the fulfilment of the hope of every faith, and the good dreams of every culture.

*Cheers  
app*  
Christ is the inspiration of those of all races who have fought, in the words of Nelson Mandela, "against white domination and against black domination and who have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society, a happy place for all peoples".

There have always been those in the Churches of South Africa who have borne true witness to this ideal and given themselves wholly for it in the freedom of faith. There were missionaries, African prophets, ordinary Christians who envisaged this shared life in the Spirit.

Church leaders have been raised up again and again to continue that teaching. You can name them better than I. Some should be here today and they are not. I cannot fail to mention Sigisbert, Bishop Suffragan of Johannesburg, that gentle Bishop of our Church.

*detention*  
III

Today, Desmond Tutu, who stands in that great succession, has been enthroned as Archbishop at this critical moment in the life of this nation. He has been raised up in this generation as a witness to the real power and purpose of God in Christ. I well remember his message to the Church of England earlier this year. It rings true to the theme and goal of his life: "We want to be freed - but with the whites".

If all of us, black and white, are ready for a real turning to God, then the infinite power of faith and freedom can be released in the Church and in the world.

The way of the Cross is a sign of hope and an answer to sorrow. But it also asks questions of each of us: it demands to know by what right we call ourselves Christians.

Here in South Africa in a religious country the questions posed by the Cross have a resonance perhaps greater than anywhere in the world. As I stand here on the tip of Africa, I cannot escape the sense of history unfolding - the sense that here on what was once called the Dark Continent there is the threat of greater darkness still.

There is a moment in the lives of all of us, and of all our nations, when we have to choose, finally, between the way of life and the way of death.

Which is the way for South Africa? Is the way of violence the way of life or death - be the violence perpetrated by the State or practised by the individual? Is imprisonment and torture the way to freedom and peace? Or does it lead instead to anger, frustration and despair? Which way are South Africans choosing?

I hear the voices of those who yearn for peace. But I hear as loudly those who seem to long for blood and war. Those voices are heard from all communities.

The way to bridge this gulf is the Christian way of self-giving repentance, the way of generosity, the way of love and life itself.

The way of the Cross means readiness to talk and to listen, even when words appear empty. To talk of the future when it's tempting to dwell in the past. To reason when others choose rhetoric. To stay calm when others counsel war. The Christian way shows us too that words alone are not enough. They must spring from a Christ-like spirit of love, compassion and understanding.

The world is looking today to South Africa for signs of this spirit. They are looking for a miracle. Such a miracle always involves risk. Here in this part of Africa we see focussed the problems which face us in every part of our world. They can be summarised in one simple question from the Gospel: "How is it possible to love my neighbour as myself?"

So on this enthronement day we, neighbours to each other, give thanks for Desmond, and pray for God's blessing on this Church and on this beloved country. We know that however much we may be separated from one another - by the oceans of the world, by the laws of the land, or by prison bars - nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord: not persecution or affliction, nothing in the world as it is, or as it shall be, nothing in death or life. We know that in the end our Resurrection faith will triumph, and transform the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

One hundred years ago a Preacher in my own land, Hugh Price Hughes, sounded this true note of Christian Hope.

"If you ever hear anybody saying that slavery is inevitable, war is inevitable, poverty is inevitable, you can shout out: 'Thank God that's a lie! Jesus Christ lives and shall bring it about that right shall utterly prevail'."

In that confident faith we shall share the Bread and Cup of this Sacrament, and pray that Christ may be enthroned in all our hearts, for He is our God, for time and for eternity. Amen.