

FAITH, HOPE and LOVE

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The sermon preached by the Reverend

Lance R. Shilton

at Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide,

at the City Farewell Service
on Sunday, 25th November, 1973

Rector from 1957 to 1973

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

The sermon given at the City Farewell Service by the Reverend Lance R. Shilton, B.A., B.D., Th.L., on his last Sunday as Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide, before going to Sydney to be Dean of St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.

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FAITH, LOVE and HOPE

Earlier this year on the night before my visit to ancient Thessalonika in Greece, I carefully read through St. Paul's letters to the Christians of that place. In the back of my mind was the thought that in November I would have to stand in this pulpit on my last Sunday as Rector of this Church after 16½ years.

I realised then that this is what I would want to say to you now: I Thess. 1:2, 3 - "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love, and patience of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

The Apostle Paul was speaking on behalf of himself, of Timothy and of Silas. May I speak to you on behalf of my wife and family, as well as my own:

- We give thanks to God always for you all;
- We mention you often in our prayers;
- We remember your faith, love and patience.

St. Paul commended the congregation of Christians at Thessalonika for three reasons:

(a) Their work of faith (TEV "You put your faith into practice"). Faith for Paul is a warm, personal trust in the living Saviour which transforms the whole of life;

(b) Their labour of love (TEV "Your love made you work so hard".) Paul's term is a strong one meaning that out of love they laboured to the point of weariness;

(c) Their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (TEV "Your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm"). Paul means not a passive resignation but active steadfastness in facing difficulties.

You are to be commended because you put your faith into practice.

Your faith has not been wobbly, wafting out of the whims of the imagination of man; it has been thoroughly grounded in the Word of God. It has been centred upon Christ and His finished work on the Cross. Your justification before God has come through faith in His death and resurrection and not in your own resolutions or good deeds. Your faith has worked in bringing peace with God and that peace is being worked out in your consistent witness.

You are to be commended because your love made you work so hard.

This Church has on the staff 4 full-time clergy, 3 full-time lay people, and 3 part-time lay people who are paid. In addition, there are literally hundreds of others involved in the witness of this Church. But whether your work is stipendiary or honorary, it is a labour of love for God. It is voluntary only in the sense that you could choose to do otherwise. It is compulsory in the sense that the love of Christ constrains you.

You are to be commended because "your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm."

You have not surrendered to pressures outside the Church to conform to your environment or be squeezed into their mould. You have held on to the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He has the right to claim the allegiance of all and that He will come again at the consummation of the Age. And you have resisted pressures within the Church to deprecate the work of Christ. If the recent "Advertiser" editorial is correct that 10% of Protestant clergy have lost their faith, for once I would be happy not to identify Anglicanism with Protestantism. Your loyalty to the authenticity of the Scriptures and doctrine of the 39 Articles means that your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ remains firm.

All Christians are under obligation to God. They have been freed from the slavery of sin which brought nothing but misery, guilt and despair, and made servants of Christ Who provides happiness, forgiveness and purpose. We have endeavoured by the grace of God to measure up to all the implications of being a

full-time staff. As I have spoken at conferences in other places I have endeavoured to make this point clear that the work of the layman is not as is commonly supposed, to help the clergyman do his work; but it is the responsibility of the clergyman to help the layman make his witness effective in the world. I am thankful to say that lay Christians are not considered 3rd-rate Christians, with missionaries and ministers in the 1st and 2nd places, but their calling is from God. Part of that responsibility is serving God through the church itself. How thankful I am that so many in this congregation, both directly and indirectly, are actively involved in effective witness through the mass media. How thankful I am that so many share in the pastoral responsibilities in caring for the sick and the aged, the indifferent and the newcomer. How thankful I am for the consistent service of those who teach children and adults in the educational programme. How thankful I am for all who dedicate their musical talents to the glory of God. My thanks to all who have stood loyally behind me at times of public controversy or have themselves been prepared to stand up and be counted. My thanks!

2. MY TESTIMONY:

The preaching and the writing of St. Paul were based upon his personal experience of Christ. For the Christian faith was more than a religious search, or an academic exercise, or a moral philosophy; it was a transforming experience of the grace of God. Listen to his words from I Cor. 15 - "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the Gospel, in which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received Last of all he appeared also to me by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain"

(vv. 1,3,8,10).

I came to you with a personal experience of God's saving grace in my life. This has been fundamental to all my preaching, writing, teaching and pastoral care. I was born, baptized and confirmed as an Anglican. I attended church and Sunday School every Sunday. Only rare times of sickness has prevented me from attending church every Sunday. I was first taken to church in a pram; walked for ten minutes each Sunday as a boy; rode a pushbike as a vicar in Melbourne, and just walked in from the Rectory next door since being Rector of this church, and I intend to worship God on Sundays with other believers until I die. But in my teenage years it became boring. My religion was formal. My beliefs

were borrowed and my life was mixed up. I honestly thought that Christianity and misery went together, and that ministers had to be very reverent and give up everything in life that was exciting and interesting. At 17 it was pointed out to me that the Christian life was joyful not miserable, demanding not boring, and adventurous not dull, and that the key to this new life was found in a personal relationship with Christ. Very simply and sincerely I received Jesus Christ as my Saviour and asked Him to control my life. Then I realized that He had forgiven my sins and had promised the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. This was the beginning of a pilgrimage for Christ full of joy and peace in believing with challenge and opportunity in serving. This life became full of purpose. Death lost its sting. Eternal life became a personal experience.

Perhaps that explains why my emphasis has been upon evangelism. I have always wanted to share with others what has meant most to me. There's only one joy comparable to that of coming to Christ oneself, and that is being used by God to bring another person to Him. That's my testimony.

3. MY VOCATION:

The apostle Paul was always conscious of his particular vocation. Right at the beginning of his first letter to the Corinthians he said, "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus." Each Christian is called of God to serve Him and it varies from person to person. For me it was a vocation to the ministry of the church. It came 4 years after my conversion while serving in the army. It was clear and challenging. After much earnest prayer, confirmation from the Scriptures and from conversation with Christian friends, in faith I obeyed God's call. I had left school at 14 years at the end of the economic depression years. To answer God's call I needed to start preparing by correspondence to qualify for entrance to theological and university study. I had no money. I had no training in public speaking or debating. But God had called. Certain verses of Scripture which had been meaningful to me earlier in my Christian life kept coming back to strengthen the irresistible urge within me to answer God's call. Proverbs 3: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." The words of Christ Himself - "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

pleasure for me that he should be here both at the beginning and the end of my incumbency. I have valued his personal friendship and his willingness frequently to come to Holy Trinity Church for Confirmation Services and other special occasions. His dedication to his Office and his efficient management has set a fine example to clergy and lay people alike.

I personally have valued the opportunity of service on several Diocesan committees, on the Standing Committee for a short period, the Liturgical Commission for discussions on the revision of the Prayer Book and more recently on the Radio and T.V. Committee. All this has been profitable for the future, particularly as my new post will require deeper involvement on a Diocesan level.

During my time as Rector, associated with me have been 13 assistant Curates. Their contribution has been most outstanding. They have all been men of high calibre, mature experience and wholehearted commitment. Our oneness in Christ as we have worked together in Christian fellowship has been preserved through regular prayer together, open discussion and common courtesy and personal loyalty. I am most grateful for that. Their ministry has widened within the Church. As well as those at present on the staff in Adelaide, others are in the Diocese of Willochra, in the States of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Others are overseas in New Zealand, the United States, and as missionaries in South America and Indonesia.

Relationships within the wider Church also include responsibilities amongst Australian Aborigines and to people overseas in missionary endeavour. Evangelism at home naturally leads in ever-widening circles to the ends of the earth. Missionary endeavour overseas should never replace evangelism on the home level. This doesn't mean that missionary commitment comes last, at the fag end of Church life with the support of whatever money is left over after the local needs have been met. Nor, on the other hand, does it mean that only missionaries are first-class Christians, with other clergy as second-class, and the

laity as third-class. All Christians are committed to the total task for the whole world. I am thankful to say that total missionary giving over the last 10 years has reached the 6 figure mark and at present there are 25 parishioners, including wives, from Holy Trinity Church serving in other countries as missionaries or members serving abroad. While a number of other agencies have been supported, the bulk of it has gone to the Church Missionary Society with which most of our missionaries are serving. I have valued the fellowship on the State and Federal levels of C.M.S. and the opportunities on overseas tours of visiting our missionaries in their situations. All this I believe has helped me not to be too parochially-minded and to keep before me a world vision.

Relationship within the wider Church has also included affiliation with interdenominational Christian agencies such as Youth for Christ, Campaigners for Christ, Open Air Campaigners, Scripture Union, the Inter-Varsity Fellowship and the Evangelical Alliance. Some of these organisations were in existence long before the modern ecumenical movement to give expression to an inner spiritual unity based upon the essentials of the Gospel from which collective action arose. The E.A. which endeavours to co-ordinate the efforts of a number of these agencies has been responsible in this State for sponsoring a number of visits of outstanding interstate and overseas visitors in connection with evangelism and Christian teaching, such as the visit of the Revd. John Stott, the Committee responsible for the visits of Dr. Billy Graham and Leighton Ford, Gladys Aylward ("The Small Woman"), Dr. Paul Rees (then a President of World Vision), and Cliff Richard.

As a Church, you have made it possible for me to be involved in these things. I remember quite distinctly a prominent parishioner of this Church standing up at an Annual Vestry Meeting and saying, "We want our Rector to feel free to be involved in missions outside the Church; we see it as part of our missionary responsibility as a Church." Every year, I have at least one evangelistic mission in another Diocese, as well as speaking at Interstate Conferences. The parishioner's remark was a great

encouragement to me. I have tried not to use this freedom wrongly because I considered continuity of contact with the family of faith here important so that rarely have I been absent on a Sunday, apart from annual holidays and overseas tours.

Fellowship amongst the City Ministers has also been significant for me. At our monthly luncheon we have been able to discuss together with courtesy and frankness matters of common concern to us all in our City witness. Members of various theological opinions and completely different methods have been able to talk together and act together as an expression of our unity of purpose. Unfortunately, some in the community, particularly those outside the Church, are so out-of-date in their knowledge about the Church as a whole that they fail to appreciate sectarianism as such is fading away and being replaced by constructive and considerate relationship within the Church.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY:

It is no longer possible to reach the whole community through a City or a local Church, except indirectly through the personal witness of the individual Christians whose influence could penetrate society as salt, cleansing and preserving it. In our modern technological age there are new opportunities of contact. I refer particularly to mass media communication. As a City Church we have welcomed people in responsible positions in the City to special Services. It is most pleasing to have representatives of the Adelaide City Council here. We also welcome Members of Parliament. Our civil and Parliamentary Services have usually been broadcast or telecast, as have special Services for the Festival of Arts and other public occasions. Since being Rector, I have been involved in at least 150 Services on national and commercial stations. I realise that the broadcast of Church Services over radio has lost its popularity - some for good reasons because they have been so poorly presented by some Churches with little appreciation of the attitude of non-Church-going listeners. Yet it seems strange that the public should now scarcely hear on radio or see on television what is a significant part of what Christians do - that is, work together. No-one would be interested in hearing only discussions and debates about

football or cricket without the opportunity of seeing a game played.

I am grateful to 5DN where I have had the opportunity of presenting over 4,000 "Meditations". They are now presented at 2 minutes to 12, and again at 4.15 a.m. It is remarkable how many people listen in the early hours of the morning - taxi drivers, nurses, shift workers and people who can't sleep at night. One lady wrote, "I find it difficult to sleep at night, but after hearing your epilogue I go straight off." At least it does some people some good.

We have had over the years many opportunities of being involved in a variety of radio and television programmes through the dedicated work of the Choir and other musicians. This has been most significant. Debates on controversial issues have enabled the community to realise that the Christian message is not as out-of-date as they might think, and that its relevance can be demonstrated.

Opportunities of answering questions through "Guideline" in "The Advertiser" have, I trust, been helpful to people throughout the community. There are many questions being asked today about the Christian Faith and it is amazing how often 'religion' is in the news. We must never forget that the Christian community is a most significant minority, particularly when one realises that 28% of Australians are in Church at least once every 3 weeks - i.e. over 3 million people. More people are regularly at Church than watch sporting events. The prejudice of people against the Christian Church and of some who control the media is such that they fail to give coverage in proportion to the significance of our Christian minority. But that may not be only because it is not commercially profitable, but also because Christians fail to vocalize their requests and are apathetic in making the stand they should, or are too ignorant of what are the opportunities and their responsibilities to the whole community in communicating the Gospel through the media.

As a Church we have published over 100,000 booklets, sermons and books which have been distributed throughout

fabrication. I can honestly say that the motive for my stand is a deep concern for the long-term welfare of all people. How can you claim to love God with all your being if you fail to love your neighbour when the tests are applied? Like others in the congregation, the decision to stand up and be counted is already made - we can do no other. One thing has continued to encourage me. Behind me there has always been the congregation of Christians here at Holy Trinity, loyally supporting, faithfully praying and actively working, and wholeheartedly sharing. What a unique fellowship this has been, culminating in the great Festival of Light occasion in Adelaide and the rest of Australia. My commitment has been your commitment.

5. MY ADVICE:

The Apostle Paul had to deal with all kinds of problems within the church and outside it. There were questions regarding marriage, money, divisions, moral issues, social problems, speaking in tongues and personal relationships. More heavily than the afflictions from those outside the church who were ready to discredit, abuse, persecute or kill him, there weighed upon his mind the care of all the churches. That's why he presumed to offer his advice. I'm no St. Paul, and you haven't the problems which first century Christians had, but I am presuming to give my advice on how to go on as Christians and how to become more effective in Christian witness through the church. Here are 18 points:

- (1) Effective delegation means not having everything in your own hands but having your finger on the pulse;
- (2) Details are important but they should not sidetrack your main purpose or absorb a disproportionate amount of the available time;
- (3) Be careful about your personal and public relationships and don't presume upon the Christian grace of others;
- (4) Be stimulated from outside the limits of your own environment through serious reading, wide travel, discriminate use of the media and critical discussions;
- (5) Don't expect others to work harder than yourself;
- (6) Don't put money in the first place. Find out what God's will is and act responsibly;
- (7) Be authoritative but not authoritarian by basing your leadership on the principles of God's Word and not on

the status of your position;

- (8) Peace within yourself does not mean peace at any price outside yourself;
- (9) Work as if all depends upon you and pray as if all depends upon God;
- (10) Encourage others to stand firm for their faith, but set the example yourself;
- (11) The lessons of faith are learned by progressive experience and not by continual observation;
- (12) Be loyal to those who work over you, under you or beside you;
- (13) Don't allow nervousness to prevent you from doing God's Will;
- (14) Don't make "a thing" of any special point of doctrine, however important it may be. Endeavour to keep the whole counsel of God;
- (15) Remain aware of the thinking of non-Christians and nurture their friendship;
- (16) Walk by faith and not by sight. As one step of faith leads into sight, be ready for the next step of faith;
- (17) Obey your conscience but make sure that it is enlightened by the Word of God and inspired by the power of God;

In giving this advice to you, I remind myself how often I have failed to take it myself. Therefore, I must add another point:

- (18) Keep coming back to God for forgiveness for the past, power for the present and direction for the future.

6. MY PRAYER:

My prayer for you who have shared my determination to know nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, is also in the words of St. Paul that "the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus" (I Cor. 16:23,24). The fellowship of prayer will continue throughout the years to follow. I shall pray for you in the great opportunities which are opening up before you in new ventures of faith. I shall pray for your new Rector that he may be given love and power and wisdom. I feel

doors of opportunity. Prayer keeps you humbly dependent upon Christ your Master. Your new Rector needs your prayers as under God he takes on the responsibility of this Church. I need your prayers as I face new challenges in the largest City in Australia.

Let me leave with you a verse which I have found helpful throughout the whole of my Christian life and it keeps coming back to me at times of fresh challenge, as it comes back to me now:

"Trust in the Lord with all thy might and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Yes! We will always thank God for you all, and always mention you in our prayers. "For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm."

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It is quite understandable that the aspect of Lance Shilton's ministry that the media have tended to emphasise has been his declarations on ethical and moral issues.

Here are some of his hard-hitting publications:

No No Calcutta (OP 7 - \$1). The thrilling story of the faith and courageous action that led to the banning of the pornographic play "Oh! Calcutta!" in South Australia. Edited by Lance Shilton

How Can the Church Mind its Own Business? (D 17 - 10¢). A revealing discussion on what exactly is the "business" of the Church in the world today.

Permissiveness in Society (D 71 - 10¢). A graphic account of the activities of those who promote moral corruption, and a challenge to Christians in Australia to fight to keep our society wholesome.

Available from the

TRINITY PUBLISHING SOCIETY

Citizens of South Australia have become familiar with the name of Lance Shilton. They know him as the leader of an active church, a spokesman for Christian moral standards in society, and as a persistent evangelist.

Many of these citizens, including church and community leaders, gathered on his last Sunday as Rector of Holy Trinity to give thanks for his sixteen years in this post, and to wish him and his family well as they leave for Sydney.

Here is the address that Lance Shilton gave on that occasion, looking back with gratitude over the years, and calling us to a practical faith, a steadfast hope and an ardent love for Jesus Christ in the years to come.

ISBN for this address: 0 86945 075 1

ISBN for this series: 0 86945 914 7

The partner to this address is the one given on the same day at the Church Farewell Service:

THE LAST SAY (D 76 - 10¢) by Lance Shilton

Build for Christian maturity with literature from the

TRINITY PUBLISHING SOCIETY

87 North Terrace,
ADELAIDE, South Australia, 5000