

Trinity Sunday

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Date: 07 June 1998

Preacher: Tom Morgan

[0 : 0 0] This is the AM service on Trinity Sunday, 7th of June, 1998. The preacher is Tom Morgan, and his sermon is based on Psalm 46.

Let's just for a moment bow and pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for every opportunity we have of glorifying your name and using the talents you give us. We thank you for those who sing and play musical instruments.

We thank you for those who witness just by a warm and friendly smile and those who are able to give a word and a reason for the hope within them. Bless us all now, we pray, as we hear your word, as we hear it expounded, as we hear you speak to us through your spirit and use us in your service for Christ's sake.

Amen. Well, it just shows you things change over the years, doesn't it? I was harking back to dear old Bishop Baker, who was principal of Ridley College, as I looked at that, but he used to call that Jehovah Jireh.

So I think it's perhaps pronounced, it's probably an American song, that one, and the Americans don't know how to speak English.

[1 : 2 2] Anyone here from America? No, I'm a bit biased, you see. Thank you dear Victor Paul Barker for inviting me back. I am glad to be able to come back and be in this place which has many memories, and that is, I guess, for us all, whether we're new or whether we've been here for a long time.

Well, it was 30 years ago, in fact, 1968, that I was inducted here as the vicar, and it was 130 years ago that the foundation stone of this church was laid, at least that that church was laid, the original church.

So it's 130th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. In the end, after a while, we got to forget, well, we had a hard time remembering which thing we were remembering.

The completion of the church in 1932, and then this church's dedication in 1971, and so there you are, you're heading towards the 20th anniversary.

Is it 30? Well, we know. Yes, the 30th anniversary of that and a few years' time. Years roll by, don't they? Well, it's just as well.

[2 : 4 7] And it's marvellous who you have to listen to in port-pots from time to time, is it not? I'm often reminded of the story of the chaps who were comparing notes, good Anglicans and church wardens as they were.

You know, church wardens, I don't know whether anyone ever reads the Trustees Investors Act these days, no one seems to know what their duty is, but church wardens, among other things, are supposed to, did you know, keep order during church services.

Now, I don't doubt things don't get out of hand here, but I know one place where everyone shall remain anonymous, but there was a clergyman waxing eloquent, preaching his heart out, but there was somebody in the congregation who didn't like what he had to say and kept interjecting.

In the end, the church wardens threatened him and said, listen, if you don't stop, we'll have to thump you. They were good church wardens, those fellas. I won't mention any names in particular, any names of family names here.

But this fellow kept interjecting. In the end, they thumped him and they carried him out. And do you know, as he was being carried out through the porch, he was heard to say, thump me again, I can still hear him.

[3 : 57] You see? So it does happen, but not always is everything that is preached enjoyed by all.

However, preachers are not there to preach what is enjoyed. Preachers are there to preach what they believe God has called them to preach. And as I thought and prayed about this, and I had plenty of time, your good vicar is better organised than I was.

I never, ever asked anyone 12 months ahead to come and preach. But he did. And I give him full marks for that. And so I had a long time to think and pray about it. And they came to me, and those who know me know that I'm rather fond of the Psalms.

And here came to me Psalm 46, verse 1, which is a wonderful Psalm. And you've heard it today. God is our hope and strength, our refuge and strength.

I keep familiar with the old prayer book version, so God is our hope and strength. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Now as we think back to even before 130 years ago, when services were first held here in the home of the Pickerings, and Canon Perch from St Stephen's Richmond came out once a month in his horse and jinker to give communion, we're reminded of a godly people who settled this area.

[5 : 25] They were in those days mainly of two backgrounds, the English and the German. In the 1850s came many German folk from that background. And so there were mainly those two religions, and the three old historic churches of this area are the Anglican, the Lutheran, and the Church of Christ, which is unusual.

But that is a fact. They were the three original churches in this area for 900 years. Later others came into Doncaster. Both the Lutheran and the Anglicans came from a background of that Reformed and Evangelical faith, that faith which knew where it stood, which stood foursquare upon the Word of God.

I always believed that Article 6 of our 39 Articles of Religion, which I don't know whether even the theological students hear about in these days because they don't use the Book of Common Prayer.

They are printed in the APBA. I don't know whether they're in the APBA. This is a marvellous thing, probably in some new language. But anyway, the fact is, Article 6, I call it the Magna Carta of the Reformation for Anglicans because it said this, Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not found therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be thought requisite or necessary of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith.

And on that, the Anglican Church takes its stand. If you can't find it in the Bible, if you can't prove it from the Bible, forget it. You don't have to believe it.

[7 : 03] There are churches which add and there are churches which subtract from the Word of God. The more's the pity. Our Anglican Church is a scriptural church and we make no apology for it.

And we, the reason we have colleges like Ridley College, as it's been my privilege to serve for many years, that college, we make sure that there are those learner doctors of the law who are able to expound that word from the original Hebrew in the Old Testament to the original Greek of the New.

I learned a smattering of some of that. Never was all that good on languages. The forebears then who came here came from that background of those religions.

And in those days when this area was being settled, what caused it to be settled? Well, the cities continue to expand. I'm amazed at how I live at Romsey, which is where my boyhood days were spent.

And as you go up that direction, you see the city now expanding more and more out that way. Have a daughter, lives at Digger's Rest. Very shortly, we'll have wall-to-wall houses from Taylor's Lakes or right through to Digger's Rest, the way it's going.

[8 : 24] If you haven't been out that way for a while, go for a drive. Well, people are always wanting land and houses and expanding their way. But one of the things which gave a boost to this area was the discovery of gold at Anderson's Creek, if you now call Warrandyte.

But Anderson's Creek Road is still there. In the 1850s. Indeed, I think gold was first found there in Victoria, before even at Mount Alexander and Castle Main.

And so people came out. Not everybody can find gold, not everybody can loot from it. So you need others to help and grow food and things like that. Now this area, the land in this area is not all that wonderful, but it can grow fruit.

And so it was found to be suitable for orchards and that suited those early families who came out from the British Isles and from Germany. And those great names of this area, which are still reflected by some in this congregation, indeed by organists, as one and others I could mention, those family names are sometimes reflected in street names, contributed much, not only by their physical labour, but by the faith they held in the living God.

And they, no doubt, when they came to this land, imagine coming across the other side of the world in sailing ships which if you were lucky got here in three months and maybe took longer.

[9 : 53] Being buffeted by the sea, being seasick for days and weeks on end, and coming here and finding a wilderness. Nothing like the green and pleasant land they had left.

Nothing by a land which has for centuries been settled and where there are settled ways of life. Where the animals and the birds and the trees and all nature was known. Coming to a new country, to a strange land on the opposite side of the world.

Everything primitive. They would be lonely. They would know that perhaps in their hearts they would never see their parents and relations from those old countries again because they would never be able to get back there as things were then.

Everything bloomed at the wrong time. The seasons were at the wrong time of the year. The ground was hard. And if you plant an orchard, Eric will probably correct me, but it takes seven years, Eric.

Seven years before you can get your fruit? Six or seven years. The thing I knew least about when I came here although I'd served in the bush was orchards. So I had to learn about them here. Seven years.

[11 : 10] Well, if you had to make do for seven years while your orchard came, good. That would be something. How would you live? Well, they made by one way or another.

Those women were great cooks, I guess, and with a bag of flour and a few primitive things, they could make enough. And the bread they made in those days, mind you, wasn't like the cotton wool we get these days to eat.

There was probably a meal in every bite and it was good bread. And so they could live on bread and cheese and they could make much of that if they had a cow and a few things like that themselves. This was a country area right up.

About the time I came here it was changing from orchards. It changed a great deal. And as I reminding folk at the 8am service it had at that time the highest rate of development of any urban area in Australia.

There were 12 families a week moving into this area and four of them were Anglican. It was a great situation for many parish to have four Anglican families a week moving into them and they move out and die out. Well, the church couldn't help but grow could it if that happened.

[12:18] But going back to the times of our forebears who saw to the laying of the foundation stone of a church who often and I've seen this in country area after country area as I still serve in the executive of the Bush Church Aid Society and most of those areas and parishes I've visited and we still hear of first hand reports but the people who moved out there were a godly people who would often have built a stone church a solid church before they ever built a solid house for themselves.

They built the house of God because now no one is going to do that unless God meant something to them. I thought I was in an old church here but when we went out to Westendom we found one ten years older and that foundation stone was laid in 1856 and the church opened in 1859 just ten years before this one here was opened and that was a new housing area that was a farming area then but again those people when I've got a good memory which slips me at times Puckle Street Mooney Ponds who knows that great shopping centre nobody these days well Puckle Street was named after the first vicar of that area Mr Puckle Edward Puckle came there in 1856 the church was built in three years and three years later it was consecrated paid off and it seats 300 a beautiful church still standing so well today with hardly a crack in it where can you tell me the Anglican church these days within six years of a new area being developed has got a church built and paid for we don't have the priorities these days that our forebears had they came out thinking naturally there is a God this is his world he's put us here with a plan and purpose for our lives

God was their refuge and their strength a refuge yes what a pity it is these days that we have let a generation or so go and some of that's been the church's own fault when I came here we had a Sunday school of 650 we were facing by the chap who was then a clergyman who was the diocesan education officer being told that Sunday schools were old hat and you had to have family services where the whole family could worship together I envisioned we'd need a cathedral here but the fact of it was that I got up at that meeting and told him I never was that keen on all the latest ideas just because they were the latest and I'm afraid I had to oppose him because I believed that children had to be taught things in language they could understand and I've yet to hear a clergyman who can give an address to a congregational group a family group which range from two or three years of age up to 80 or 90 years of age and have the whole lot intelligently understand it it's ridiculous and so we had family services here once a term for junior and then for senior the one service after the other and addressed it of course to the juniors because what the juniors hear the adults can understand but what the adults hear the juniors can't however

I was in a minority so I've been on a very great number of things in the they came here with a knowledge of God and they passed it on to their families today we have a problem we have young people who I see the figures sometimes argued for sometimes against there's always some expert who's got a point he can put for and against but from what I've seen of the majority and I look into this a bit because I'm president of drug arm and here in Victoria we have at least three vans out which assist young people

Friday Saturday nights particularly Sunday nights sometimes in Swanston Street out around Rowville and we've got just open a fortnight ago to go to breakfast we dedicated the van for the western area of Melbourne out at Maidstone with 40 people trained up willing to give their time and go out and counsel young people a lost generation we have the highest rate of suicide among young children in the western world in this country Australia a great country a country with hope where others haven't hoped a country with great possibilities still and why well let me say that I believe it from the heart that if people do not know God have no knowledge of God then when trouble comes they are on their uppers and they've got no hope and they've got no refuge so what do they turn to well they turn to the easiest thing possible drugs which sadly are a tragedy and which do them no good and as I was mentioning this morning the most common drug of all which we take for granted because it's been socially acceptable for years is still the drug which causes

[18 : 13] Australia the greatest cost and the greatest trouble and the greatest number of family backgrounds and that is alcohol still the greatest problem well we had our stories from the bands of 12 year olds who have been blind drunk and they drink because they're bored out of their lives and their parents are boozed too so they follow mum and dad's example or some come from homes where mum and dad are not drinkers like that but where mum and dad certainly don't give them any faith and the only time they've heard the name of Jesus Christ or of God is as a blasphemous swear word they've never been to Sunday sure they've never been to school I spent some years as chairman of a school council and I remember with great interest hearing the story the principal told of a girl in year nine and his school teachers either year nines are a problem anyway a girl in year nine who came from a family background which was wealthy enough but she had a friend whose parents had split up and sadly that's a story these days which is happening all too often and they'd been picked up for stealing in Cole's store and the principal carpeted the lass and said why why you didn't need to ah she said miss I didn't need to but my friend parents have split up and it was near the beginning of the school year and she didn't have some of the things she needed and Cole's looked there making profit and so they thought they wouldn't miss it

I took some of these things for her and she had and the principal said but don't you know that is stealing it's wrong to steal whether a Cole's no she couldn't see that she could not see that it was wrong to steal she was going on the Robin Hood principle you see rob the rich and help the poor the rich won't miss it she'd never known the Ten Commandments she didn't know that God's eternal moral law says thou shalt not steal whether it's from the rich the poor or anybody else it is wrong to do that now I've heard every reason under the sun why young people are on drugs and ways to fix them up and the problems of our present day and breakups in marriages except this we for the first time in Australia's history for the first time in the 130 years we're looking at we have now children who are the children of young people who never ever went to

Sunday school or church up until about 30 years ago most young people went to Sunday school and they learned at least the Ten Commandments and the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and a few basic things like that and even if at 14 they left and they never darkened the church doorstep again they had some knowledge of basic morals and ethics you didn't hear in those days of young people after money for drugs or anything else who'd go in and some helpless old cripple not only robbed them but beat them up and leave them half dead they had a better knowledge at least there was some honour among thieves but today you see without that basic knowledge of God's eternal moral law and what is right from what is wrong then the sky's the limit it becomes my word against your word as to what is right and this young person openly challenged the principle the principle said it is wrong and this young man said you say it is wrong but

I say it is right and who's to say you're right or I'm right and the principle was a bit stumped I imagine that is not an unusual story in these days for school principles without a knowledge of the living God which man was created to have with a soul which craves for that fellowship with the creator we will find satisfaction in something else or someone else and man over the centuries man from nation to nation has been a genius at making another God the trouble is that the other gods that men make are made in man's image instead of our God who made us in his image and though through sin we are a poorer reflection we are still made in the image of

God with the capacity for fellowship with him well our forebears knew that and they thought that their children knew that are you training your children to a living faith in the living God yes we can't force them to believe but we can set them an example and we can encourage them I've had parents say to me over the years and I've lost track of the number of baptisms but as I've spoken to parents about bringing those children along to Sunday school and we had a role and we sent them reminders at four years of age that Sunday school was there for them they said look this was the intelligent answer I'm never going to force my children look if they want to come to Sunday school and church they can come but I'm not going to make them and I said well are you going to make them go to school I said of course we're going to make them go to school I said what's the difference oh but there's no difference in not bringing children to Sunday school and church and bringing them up to know the living

[24 : 16] God than not letting children not go to school and when they're around about 14 you say to them then as some of these parents have said to me we're going to let our children make their minds up when they get to about 14 or 15 as to whether they want to come or not when they're old enough to make up their minds they're going to make up their minds on a vacuum a vacuum of knowledge about what it is they've got to make their minds up on because they don't know God or anything about him how can you make your mind up on something you don't know anything about and how can anyone say at 14 or 15 they've never gone to school well I'm going to be a lawyer I want to be a bricklayer I want to be a carpenter anything at all the first thing they've got to know is how to read and write and the mathematics needed for transpositional formulae or whatever it might be for their trade they can't be to school they can't be anything we sin against our children in not encouraging them and bringing them to Sunday school and church to hear the word of

God and the knowledge of God fair enough if later they say well I'm now not interested they've made their mind up they're not on a vacuum but on knowledge our forebears found in God a refuge they didn't have to turn to drugs in God was their refuge now refuge is a word which has the thought of being defensive that word refuge the same Hebrew word can be translated a fort or a fortress from which comes that great hymn of Martin Luther's a mighty fortress is our God he could have just as well put a mighty refuge is our God because in a fortress if you're being attacked by enemies you'll find refuge shelter and hope where there be hopelessness if you're out on the plain particularly in those days and the enemy was approaching you had no hope as one person but in a refuge in a shelter you had hope that was behind the psalmist as he thought about God

God is our refuge in God we find help but not only defensive he is our refuge and strength strength gives a dynamic we're not meant just to find refuge in God we do find it but we're meant to be out and about and we're meant to be doing for God and our forebears here got out and about and were doing for God and they built the church materially and they built its life also and I can look around this church today and I see descendants of those whom God has blessed to the third and fourth generation of those who have loved him and kept his word and they have been through sad times hard times joyful times but in it all have found in God their refuge and their strength to carry on after sadness after times of ill health or whatever that might have been just as the psalmist speaks of

God being our refuge and strength that nation of Israel dwelling there in an area where they had in earlier days earthquakes where they saw these spectacular thunderstorms where there came those mighty winds not as bad as the tornadoes we read of in America perhaps but where we remember Jesus and his followers found them on the lake on the sea of Galilee and the storm came up and they were about to be swamped and even the experienced sailors were frightened and had to call out to one and found in him the one who could control with a word even the wind and the storms peace be still said Jesus immediately there was a calm and Jesus could do that in your life and mine and he did it for our forebears when they would be worried and anxious and wondering what they were going to do next

God carried them through I think of someone who's not here today but she'd be laughing no doubt and smiling if I mentioned the fact that during the war in England when things were being bombed out of existence in London she refused to go to their age children I'm going to go I'll go but she hid under the table and sheltered there and came to this church for many years I think you still remember it here people like that found though in God their refuge and strength it's not been a characteristic just of that early age you and I can find that today God is our refuge and strength if God is our refuge and strength then it is logical that it comes as it does in the very next verse after verse two therefore will we not fear what an no sense in two people worrying about the same thing and if God is concerned about it for you or for me if we've taken it to him in prayer what are we so worried about he is doing what we've asked him to do we can trust him our forebears knew they could trust him we need to pass this faith on to our children and our children's children

[30 : 18] God is our hope our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble therefore will we not fear and further we look at verse five where the psalmist thought of Jerusalem and the state God is in the midst of her therefore shall she not be removed there have been many except Jerusalem is still there today this was written about three thousand years ago so you can say well it's demonstrated by history it's had its ups and downs there's still a troublous place to live in God doesn't guarantee us an easy life a life where all will be calm and serene but he does guarantee us peace of mind and heart and his presence as we go through life yes they saw storms and mountains shaking with earthquakes as is mentioned in verse 3 well we have the storms of life perhaps floods of worry perhaps cyclones of sickness or controversy whatever it might be in our lives bereavement our forebears knew these things we know them in our lives but if

God is our refuge and strength if God is in our midst if he's in our hearts by faith we shall not be moved we shall be able to continue giving a witness to him and Jesus Christ of course is that foundation which no man can lay other than that for the church he is the foundation true for church life and living we read about that in the third chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians and verse 11 where Paul said other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ he is the foundation for the church he is the foundation for the individual and the individual's faith if our faith is in him we have a strong foundation on which to build character and which to build family life and on which to build community life and when the troubles come earthquakes fires floods whatever we can get through them by his help faith in Jesus

Christ is the important thing in the founding of a church and it is on that faith in him that churches are built as mentioned to the eight o'clock congregation this morning there often is that misinterpretation of a well-known verse which comes from Matthew 16 and verse 18 Jesus said to Peter you are Peter and upon and on this rock I will build my church and some think therefore that immediately refers to Peter himself being the rock on which the church is built our Roman Catholic friends interpret it that way some Anglicans interpret it that way but I believe they're wrong as dear old Bishop Baker used to teach us Greek and that is what the New Testament was written in and it says in the original Greek Peter's name a rock was Petros that was the masculine form and upon this rock

I will build my church is Petra neuter gender not Petros if he said you are Petros and upon Petros I will build my church then it would have meant as our friends wrongly interpreted that it was on Peter that the church was built but it wasn't on Peter that the church was built it was on Peter's statement of faith which he's made just recorded two verses earlier in verse 16 when Jesus had asked him who do you say that I am his disciples Peter answered you are the Christ the son of the living God that's what makes a person a Christian Jews of those that generation were Jews until they believed that Jesus they believed he was a great prophet they believed he was a great rabbi but unless they believed he was the Christ the son of the living God they were not Christians not his followers that's what makes the living

God believe that truth about him I often used to say what a wonderful thing we've got the Bible in our own tongue and the words have been recorded for us the only thing we don't have is the inflections of voice and the way they were spoken did Peter say in fact did Jesus say to Peter yes Peter you're a rock but it's on this rock that I will build my church the saying that Peter had just said you are the Christ the son of the living God the new agenda as against the masculine must mean something he was not referring to Peter he was referring to something else and that's the only logical explanation of it in that passage yes it is on Jesus Christ and faith in him that the church is built and that any church is built be it a local parish church like Doncaster's or the whole church of

[36 : 10] God and because it's on that firm foundation that's why the church is still here you can build a church or a house and I used to say this to many wedding couples with wonderful materials but if you haven't seen to a proper foundation no matter what great materials you've built at what great cost with no matter what expert builders on the top of it if the foundation is wonky if it is not strong if it is not of the right material given the right conditions of wind pressure or moisture or lack of it it will all collapse a marriage a community life a parish life a denominational life must be based on a sure foundation if God then and faith in him that one true God revealed fully in his son

Jesus Christ is the foundation foundation upon which a church is built it will last if God then is also in their midst that church will continue on despite the things that happen but we speak of God what today is Trinity Sunday always observed as the anniversary of this church because of its name and what do we know of this great and mysterious being whom we call God it's a good name the English name for God God it really is a corruption of the word good he is that intense holy good being the Welsh call him oh you which means thou oh you you the you the one Moses when he first heard a personal name of God given to him when he was called at the burning bush heard

Jehovah or Yahweh Yahweh whatever the pundits tell us it may be pronounced which translated into English simply means I am God is not a God who was or a being who was or a being who's growing into something that will be or he will be one day our God always is he is the eternal being there was a time when you and I were not through faith in Jesus Christ there will not be a time when we will not be because we will have everlasting life in him our bodies yes they'll die but our being our entity indelibly impressed on our soul will continue on because we have eternal life in Christ but God we must say is a being with relation to whom there never was a time when he never was and there never will be a time when he never will be and that of course boggles our minds because we have finite minds and he is infinite unsearchable eternal revealed clearly in the new testament as a tripartite being if we like three persons in one in as best as we can put it in

English father son and holy spirit as a communal sense and fellowship within the Godhead we experience then something of that fellowship and communal spirit within a church and we're meant to no one's called to be a Christian in isolation Jesus established the church to be his family on earth for nurturing for fellowship and for refuge yes with other like minded folk and for development and of course perhaps that's where we fall down the greatest as the spearhead of the kingdom of God the evangelistic agency to spread that kingdom God is the Lord the eternal God the eternal being he is the I am and if God is for us then as Paul wrote in his epistle to the

Romans in chapter 8 and verse 31 if God is for us who or what we might say can be against us we're on the winning side we're with the strength I think the Commonwealth Bank shot anyone here worked for the Commonwealth Bank Commonwealth Bank shot itself in the foot when they dropped that great motto they had get with the strength I say to people get with the strength get with God he is the strength he is our refuge strength well to sum up God is our refuge and strength he is a very present help in trouble therefore we do not need to fear as our ancestors did not fear but went ahead in faith and you won't do anything or build anything unless you go ahead in faith and God within us by faith if he is in the midst of us will mean that we will never be removed and our witness will never be removed whether we consider ourselves as individuals families or as this church family and congregation and finally the third point from that psalm comes in verse 10 and it's a word for us all today in a generation in which many ancient concepts are challenged indeed I think almost every ancient concept is challenged verse 10 be still then and know that I am

[42 : 21] God be still in the mind in the heart in yourself why even Christians still get anxious and churned up and worried we forget to rest in him be still stop that anxiety that questioning rest in him we forget to take to heart the words of some of those beautiful old hymns which perhaps we don't hear enough these days what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer be still then and know that I am God or in relation to Jesus himself God personified God what would God be like if he became a man as a man we know Jesus was that

God in the flesh the very personification of love who gave himself for us concerned with the fatherless of the widow concerned for justice could speak justice sternly could whip people out of the temple for wrongdoing of Christ within us Paul said and perhaps he gives us this final message for today from chapter 4 of his epistle to the Philippians verses 4 to 7 rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice and then in verse 6 be anxious for nothing that's that being still it's really hard to do we don't like to unload ourselves completely to God and let him care for us but that's what faith is that's what trust is we put our trust in him be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and what happens then and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus

Christ that word guard in the Greek garrison it's like that fortress again the peace of God will guard you around he's our refuge and strength in our midst he will be ensuring us of the future and of our presence as long as he wills in this earth and in this life and in the place he calls us to serve him doing what he's called us to serve him as long as das as long as as long as some fund in this experience tab for years to them