SERMON: GELORUP 6/11/2016 & DIOCESE OF BUNBURY 1/11/2026: GEOFF CHADWICK:

ALL SAINTS

We are celebrating All Saints day today. Saints are people who have endeavored to live

their lives according to the teachings of Jesus. That's what a Saint is. So if you are endeavoring to live your life according to the teachings of Jesus, welcome to sainthood! You're All Saints! Of course we know there are some Saints who did greater deeds than others and there are many Saints who lived very humble lives and that we will never know of, but God knows them.

I was reflecting on what teachings of Jesus they were following and what teachings of Jesus are we endeavoring to follow and I think Luke Chapter 6 has it in a nutshell.

In particular, Verses 27-31. Jesus says:

> "*Love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek offer the other one also. And from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you and if anyone asks for your goods do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Lk 6:27.31, NRSV)*

I look at that teaching of Jesus and I think to myself can I do something else please!? It's a tough list! It is a tough list being faithful to the teachings of Jesus. On the one hand it gives us a sense of comfort and of joy and of wonder in God's presence, but on the other hand it gives us this list of difficult tasks. Praying for those who would hurt us, giving when it hurts, doing to others as we would have them do to ourselves. Jesus' teachings are not always easy, but fortunately, later on in the story Jesus offers the gift of the Spirit so that the Spirit may give us the tools we need the courage we need to do these things. So in talking about All Saints, as I've mentioned, Saints are people who are endeavoring to follow the teachings of Jesus in their lives.

We have much to celebrate because over the centuries there have been many many Saints, and many people who have changed the course of history for the better simply because of their faithfulness. There have been faithful followers of Jesus in all walks of life and in all conditions. Some have endured persecution, and others have lived non spectacular but beautiful lives for God.

Recently in the church calendar we had Elizabeth fry's day, a Saint who worked for Prison Reform. we've had John Wollaston's day, we've had Saint Francis day - all these

people that we know of. But let us not forget those who we do not know. Let us not forget the Saints of history who have made the present what it is.

We also have the chance on All Saints day to honor those who are Saints amongst us. Not just to look back to the past. So today, over morning tea, I hope you will honor the Saints you are sharing a piece of cake with. All of us are trying to live this life through our own personal circumstances. We may suffer persecution for our faith, maybe not in some ways in other places, but you may know when this tension between invited to go to the Test match on Sunday morning or say you're going to be at church.

It's easy for us to be discouraged, because we look at the Saints who've done great things and think that we don't live up to their example. Yes we'd all like to be Mother Teresa but no we can't live up to that example. But you know, we can do many small things in the name of Jesus to make this world a better place, and to bring the love of God amongst those where we live. We are the Saints of the present and here we are!

As we've thought of Saints of the past and as we've thought of Saints of the present, let us think about Saints of the future.

Sometimes I think we might wonder:

> *"Are we the last? Are we the last of the Saints in an age where church attendance has been declining and where many people only know the word Jesus is an expletive?"*

We wonder who will be the Saints of the future? Who will carry the faith that we have left for them? Hopefully some of them are in the Sunday School room over there! We wonder how can we get people excited about the gospel? We wonder how to pass on the treasure that we have in earthen vessels; this treasure of Jesus' life and teaching that we know is so wonderful yet somehow it's forgotten in the busyness of people's lives.

Who will the next bunch of All Saints be?

I'm good at asking questions and don't always have the answers. But I look to those who've managed to bring faith to places where all has been lost.

I've been showing a DVD on Dietrich Bonhoeffer to year 8's just recently. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was implicated in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. He was a pastor in a Lutheran Church (interesting work there on ethics). His life was so gracious that when he was put in prison by the Nazis that he managed to convert the prisoner in the cell next to him and the prison guard. That gives me hope. When all things seem lost, the Gospel still finds its way!

I look to the Gospel itself and I look at Jesus despondent and hanging on the cross; Jesus wondering if it was all worth it .I see the pain in Jesus' eyes and yet we know that

that pain will be transformed into joy, and that God takes disaster and turns it into something extraordinary and new.

I hear the message as I listen to the gospel story: that despite all:

God is not dead.

Despite everything new life will always find a way;

and despite all the frustrations we have in our church and all the confusions we have and all the wondering about what will the future be:

God's life will always find a way!

God is not dead and our Gospel message is not in vain!

Saints of the future!?

I'd like to see that!

The Lord be with you