

## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February Message:

Good morning, it is my absolute privilege this morning to lead us through the rest of our service. This day we are celebrating the ministry of 2 very special people. Celebrating 35 years of ministry here at Caversham, celebrating a life spent, to this point, serving our Lord and standing with them as they move to the next stage of their life, no longer in formal ministry here, but serving our Lord in new and different ways.

There are a lot of visitors here this morning – my name is Mathew Hessian and I am one of the Elders at here at Cavy.

The best way to celebrate Roly and Trudy in our service this morning is to do so with the Word.

We will do that and then share communion together, before we collectively release them from their roles as Pastor and send them off into the next stage of their Christian service.

So nice and simple.....

I thought we could reflect on key events and great moments, highlight all the memorable things, seminal moments in their ministry. Really capture the essence of what their 35 years here at Caversham. You know – when you think about Roly, what is it that you associate with him straight away – it is just a part of who he has been as a Pastor of this Church for all of these years.....

That's right – I am talking about Roly's love of Otago – especially Otago Rugby and Otago Cricket – so this morning I think it only fair to test him on – the genuineness of that love....

[ Quiz Roly based on a power point montage of Otago sporting events]

At Elsie Clarke's funeral last Monday Roly confessed openly to having disappeared from the odd Saturday afternoon Wedding to get to Carisbrook for a game. I remember specifically Jacque and Adrian's wedding when straight after the happy couple had left the Church a few of us headed straight to the Terrace – I think it was Otago v Auckland. To my amazement, amongst the hoards of people – there was Roly already in the ground waiting for us. Urban legend is that he was in there 38 seconds before us – and we had run down! True to her commitment to encourage and support him, over the years I had grown to think that it was probably Trudy dropping him down there that allowed him to get there before us..... But Roly reassured me during the week that in fact he did it under his own steam. I am not sure that would be possible today Roly – even if Carisbrook was still there....

Obviously I joke

Lets get into it:

Matthew 28:16 – 20:

*“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted. Jesus came and He said to them, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

I can hear you asking, why would you choose those verses to celebrate a retirement?? Let me see if I can explain that to you.....

Firstly, here is what the verse is saying:

1. The disciples were exactly where Jesus wanted them to be (you could preach a message on that alone – but not today) – they were at the mountain where he told them to be. Most likely amongst a whole number of other believers – but the disciples were there and available.
2. They worshipped him – a few doubted and we are not told what they doubted or if they ever came round, and then Jesus spoke to them.
3. Remember - they had lived with this man for 3 years, they had seen him die and they had seen him come back to life – as he said he would. And now he was preparing to leave them and return to Heaven. He had some last-minute words for them. He said, “All authority in heaven and earth is given to me.” He was making his position very clear to them – very clear that he was the King, he was in control, and that he had all the power. And, then he said to them, “Therefore, .....” He said, because I have all power and authority... therefore go and make disciples... baptise them and teach them to observe all that I already commanded you.....
4. And then he said, “I am with you always – right to the end of this age”.... That is this time on earth...

Let's focus more closely on the things Jesus said....

1. Make Disciples,
  - a. baptise them,
  - b. teach them,
  - c. pass on all of the things that I have commanded you in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We often skip over the ‘disciples’ piece of this. We hear “go out and tell people about Christ and the Good News’. Make conversions and teach them – but Jesus said make disciples.

Jesus didn't say go and baptise (convert) and leave them to their own devices and see how they go. He said “Go and make disciples...”

What is a disciple? I have been reading a great book called *Church is a Team Sport*. I have found these 4 characteristics of a disciple. I like them:

- Jesus is Lord of their life;
- They are in a relationship with other mature Christians – our faith is not a solo activity;
- They are in the process of becoming more Christ like;
- They are committed to the Mission of Christ; - when we spend time with Jesus we care about what he cares about. He cares about bringing those who do not know him into relationship with him and faith in him so that they can be saved by him.

These things are tough – it can't be done on your own, this is a team sport. You cannot be a disciple without being a part of the body, the family, the Church. That Church needs to be looked after if the believers in it are to become true disciples - as we are commanded to be. Jesus wants us to be fully committed – to him, to his people and to his mission.

His mission was to make disciples – that is why God became man. To bring his people back to Him, to save them from the separation that had existed since the time of Adam and Eve. That makes these verses the central part of the Gospel. It really does all build to this parting message Jesus.

When you play sport the last thing the coach says before you head out onto the field is usually something really important – the key message – the thing they want you to remember to carry you through the game – “remember, you are better than them, “ remember everything we have said” “make sure you always make the simple pass”, “always keep your head down....” etc etc..... the things that they think you need to know so that you will be successful. Very often it is easily

forgotten of course. The trouble is, after the first tackle the game plan goes out the window. Mike Tyson, the former heavyweight boxer and great philosopher, once said “everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”.

I am not sure it is too much different here for Jesus. These were his parting words. His great commission, just like a football coach, “You go out there and you make disciples of all nations... do you hear me?” And, often we promptly forget it as soon as we hit the first hurdle in our life or simply as we get caught up in the world in which we live...

But it is the purpose of everything we do as Christians and as a Church. It is the thing we need reminded of – if we had a half-time with Jesus, I wonder if the thing he would remind us, after we had the oranges of course, is “Go back out there and make disciples, teach them what I have commanded you, because I am with you always....”

And so to Roly and Trudy.

35 years ago, on 23 January 1984 when they were commissioned here as Pastor and (as it was expressed in those days) Pastor’s Wife – Roly and Trudy committed to specific things.....

[Sidetrack one: (you see I have listened to what you taught me Roly} That story about Carisbrook, would have been a whole lot better if my memory that Trudy had dropped him down there was true! Of course, there are myriad other examples, but it has been a team effort and their ministry here would not have been what it was if it that was not the case. I know that there will not be a person in here – Roly included – who will not endorse that.

By the way Trudy – I know it was 1984 but the title of Pastors Wife does not do justice to your work and service in this place - your relationships with us, faithfulness to us, love of us, friendship, and patience, to name a few..... I believe the impact of the example you have provided, living as you have as a disciple of Christ, - to so many girls, young women and women who are still young at heart, those who have grown up in this place, those who have come, gone and those who remain - is something we will only get to see on the other side. The best news for us is that none of that is because any title you had – it is because of who God made you. - Thank you]

Sorry, back to the script:

So, together they undertook to:

- preach and teach the word of God,
- tend the flock of Christ
- reach out to the lost and to equip the believers here for their own ministry?

The way I see it, Roly and Trudy committed to live out Jesus’ mission as given to us in Matthew 28. They have taught us and tended to us for 35 years. They have sought to equip us for our own ministries – and what should our key ministry be? We should be setting about the Mission of Christ – to reach the lost and to make disciples. What is our Church tag line “Continuing the Work of Jesus....” The Mission of Jesus. We could spend a whole morning or a series of messages unpicking this passage. We won’t though.

Each of you will have your own story and reflection on the impact Roly and Trudy have made to you. Some will be significant, and others less so, but everyone will have a story. There will be time during our picnic for some people to share those.

My journey to faith started as the result of the attitude of reaching out not just from Roly and Trudy but from their family and children. I will be eternally grateful – literally.

It was in the context of sport that Randal reached out to me, as his father had without doubt modelled to him over his life to that point. We were actually either at a half time break or between breaks in a representative football trial at the Dunedin Oval when we met. Jeremy also reached out to me on the football field too, but that was slightly different, he got “sin-binned” but we probably both should have been - that is another story. Making a decision to follow Christ in a moment of time, for me it was an Easter Camp in 1991, is easy. There were many others at the camp who did the same thing.

But learning how to live in the light of that decision transforming my world view and learning to understand all that was required, takes more than a single decision – that is lifelong journey.

I was a young man, from a family that was not committed in any way to the Christian faith – Church played no part in my life. I was converted, and I was Baptised here. It is this place, through Roly and Trudy and the people that they were pastoring, that provided to me genuine relationship with mature Christians. I experienced love and care and witnessed it being shared among others in this community in a way that was so different to anything I had experienced to that point that I was thirsty to be a part of it. It is what made me want to belong here. When I reflect on that commitment in 1984, to reach out to the lost and equip people – it is my own experience that in this place those things have been done gracefully – by you Roly and Trudy, and imitated by the people you have led.

Julie and I have travelled a lot. We started our journey here, we went away and came back and went away and came back again. Through that time, we have therefore been committed to a few churches. While my own faith has grown, and I have learnt from my own study as well as from many other preachers, my standard has always been, “what would Roly think about this”? We don’t always agree on everything – don’t get me wrong – but as I have tested the things I have learned about Gods Word over the last 27 years, the teaching and preaching received through Roly in my formative years has formed my foundation. What I know and understand now and continue to learn will always be built on what I learned in those early years.

I now find myself one of the Elders. One of the big themes we have dealt with over my time in that group has been the Pastoral Care. As Roly closed on his retirement, his concern for what will happen to the people, who will look after them and tend to them and make sure no one gets left behind or is allowed to wander off – all of those things, appeared to grow. As I tidied this message up this morning, I realised that the genuine concern shown was not about it not getting done - it comes because Roly and Trudy committed to tend to this flock in 1984 not out of obligation, but motivated by a God given love and concern for Gods people – and that is not easily let go. And so “To Tend to God Flock”. Tick.

Now as a grown man, at least physically, Roly and Trudy are considered dear friends. Are they perfect? Well I think you would not want me to say they are. And neither would they. We have different views on many things – as you will have with Roly and Trudy - but as Pastors who have been tending this flock for 35 years they been true to the commitments made 1984. We have been blessed as a Church because of that selfless commitment to the mission of Christ.

Last week when he spoke, Roly said that he will now give up and let go of the position, the money, the status the expectations and title of being pastor of Caversham Baptist Church. Then they will, as we should, be Christians striving to carry on the work of Jesus in the world, albeit in a different way, but part of God’s Church nonetheless.

Church is many things to many people, but Jesus had a reason for setting up the Church. It was to carry out his Mission in this age.

Here we get controversial, but what better way to finish –

What is Church about? What is it here for?

1. Fellowship? The chance to gather and associate with other Christians and build each other up, nurture each other, love each other... John 13:35 for example. (...By all this people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another...)
2. Biblical teaching? Perhaps this is a good reason to meet together. Of course it is. Strengthening believers and building them up in their faith.... Ephesian 4: 11-13 for example (He gave teachers to equip the saints for building up the body of Christ...)
3. Maybe Church is here to praise God? Is that the supreme purpose of Church? There is plenty of biblical instruction that supports that.

None of these things are the mission of Church.

Let me use one more sporting analogy to make my case – one close to Roly's heart. When you play Golf you need to remember a whole lot things:

Feet placement, head position, hand position, bent knees, back swing, wrist break. You need to know how to get out of bunkers and out of the rough, what club to choose and how to find your ball from time to time. In Roly's case, you need to remember to take your pills an hour before the first tee.....

Everyone of these things is really important to achieve the mission of golf. But the mission of golf is none of those things. The mission of golf is to play 18 holes using as few shots as possible. That's it.

There are all sorts of techniques, stances, clubs, theories on hand positions back swings, strategies, and plenty of different golf courses. But the mission no matter the course, the club or person is to get around the course with the least number of shots.

Church has a whole lot of elements to it – and I have named perhaps the 3 most important parts - there are endless others. They make up what Church is. But they are not the Mission. The mission is to make disciples.

We cannot do that without the teaching and preaching and ending to the Flock. We need the worship and the praise to sustain us. But the mission is to reach the lost and make disciples.

So, while Roly and Trudy are retiring from the formal role of Pastor of God's Church here at Cavy, they will not be retiring from a life of doing the Mission of Christ. They continue to run the race, as Roly said last week they have looked back to look forward to their new life.

I chose this passage this morning because it captures the things that Roly and Trudy set out to do here in 1984, and isn't it great to look back and see the way that has been lived out here as we celebrate their ministry among us? But, this passage also gives us the locker room talk we need to hear before we get back onto the field as God's Church. The best tribute we can give is to think again about our own involvement in the mission of this Church. Am I doing all I can to reach out to the lost and to make disciples in this place? That is our mission...

Together we will take communion and Roly and Trudy will serve us along with the Randal, Jeremy Bradley and Sian. As we do that, take that moment to consider your part in Christ's mission.