

**Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba**  
**Sermon – Douglas and Tricia Board Silver Wedding Celebration**  
**St Martin in the Fields**  
**25 April 2012**

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Rev 21:1-8, 22:1-5; Mark 1:1-15

May I speak in the name of God – our God, who tells us and shows us that he is Love.

Dear Douglas and Tricia, may I say what a joy and privilege it is to share this special celebration of your 25th Wedding Anniversary with you; and with those who love you and those you love.

My family and I join our own congratulations to those of everyone else here today, and to those of your many friends around the world – especially from Southern Africa, which you hold so dear to your hearts.

It is a delight and honour to stand here, and offer my reflections on this marvellous day.

And what a day it is!

It is certainly a day of ‘good news’ – and good news, as we know, means gospel.

Today is of course also the Feast of St Mark the Evangelist, the opening words of whose own gospel we just heard read.

His message underlines the message of John the Baptist which he recounts.

He tells us that if we want to know what real good news is, then we must look to Jesus Christ, who brings near the kingdom of God, and who baptizes with the Holy Spirit; and we must believe in him and build our lives on him.

This is God’s promise of good news to us.

Today we join you, Douglas and Trish, in your thanks to the God who keeps his word and who has kept his word to you; the God whose promises you have tried and found true.

Today we join in your thanks to God for his faithfulness, in helping you also keep your own promises: promises made in his presence, promises made in prayer for his grace and all its gifts – that you might abide in Jesus Christ, and so grow in what is rightly called ‘holy matrimony’, loving one another as Christ has loved you, and as God has loved his Church.

And we also thank God for you – for your lives, your marriage, your family.

We thank God for all that you have been to us and to so many others.

We thank God for all that you have done, in the service of God, his people, his world.

We thank you also, for your generosity in inviting us to share all this with you today.

Yet we are conscious that you have also given us a challenge.

You not only asked us to celebrate with you the wonderful achievement of your Silver Wedding Anniversary; but also to give thanks to God for whatever is close to our hearts as we look back over 25 years.

This is an invitation of tremendous generosity – and it is also spiritually profound.

For it invites us to take a look at the way we view our own lives; the perspective from which we engage the world; and the sort of sound-track that we run in our own heads and hearts as we reflect on our experience.

And this is deeply challenging – because it puts us on the spot.

For we are forced to acknowledge that we do not always live with what some have called ‘the attitude of gratitude’.

Too often we focus not on the good, but on what bugs us.

When people ask us how we are – sometimes we tell them!

And even if we don’t voice our grumbles and our gripes, we are aware of them within us – along with those envies or the long-held resentments that we harbour inside ourselves, and which we feed with those monologues of self-justification that spiral around in our minds and hearts when we allow them.

Of course, life is sometimes hard, and painful, and unjust. Sometimes terrible things happen – whether through somebody’s fault, deliberate or otherwise, or through accident, or for no apparent reason whatsoever.

As we look back at South Africa, 25 years ago, we certainly see situations of deep tragedy – and some of their legacies still remain with us.

Yet, at the same time, 25 years ago, we could never have guessed at so much radical change for good.

Today, Trish and Doug, you have challenged us to reflect on all of this – and to dare to see God’s hand at work in everything: desiring to work for good in all things, as far as we will let him; yearning to bring redemption in every part of our lives.

You have challenged us to live as the Talmud directs us, when it teaches ‘Before you ask God what you want, first thank God for what you have.’

You have reminded us to recall that all of life is in the hands of God, who is Alpha and Omega.

As Alpha, he is the one true beginning of all that is: he is the loving Father who created through the Eternal Word – the Word made flesh, who also re-created us through his redemption – and who sustains us in being, through his life-giving Spirit.

Yes, God is the originator of everything – and all of our lives are, and consciously should be, lived in response to him and all he has done for us.

He is also Omega – the one who will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and make all things new – the one who guarantees a happy ending to every story, if only we will accept it.

God is Alpha and Omega – and you, Trish and Douglas have invited us to be intentional in making this the ultimate perspective of our lives.

You have invited us to make our own response to St Mark’s proclamation; to receive for ourselves the words of John the Baptist which we just heard read.

He says to us ‘The Kingdom of God has come near: repent – or, as we know the Greek tells us at a deeper level – turn, reorient ourselves – and believe in the good news.’

Your invitation to us today underlines that we are all called to live as gospel people.

Gospel people dare to ‘rejoice in the Lord always’ (Phil 4:4).

Gospel people see God’s good news able to triumph over all adversity, in any and every situation.

Gospel people declare this truth through the example of lives of faithfulness, and of courageous perseverance in and through temptation or adversity.

Gospel people proclaim this hope in compassionate words to a broken and needy world.

Thank you, Douglas and Trish, that you have done this in your own lives – not least in living with such bright hope through South Africa's darkest days, encouraging us never to despair or give up.

Thank you that you dare us to look with new eyes, and with new courage, at our own lives and the challenges we face – from the ups and downs that are an inevitable part of domestic life, through to global questions of political justice and environmental integrity.

Thank you that today, you challenge us again to share with you as partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ – so that together we may bring his love, his compassion, his healing, his hope, his redemptive promise, his courage, his strength – that we may bring his overflowing more-than-abundant life, to the world around.

So today we thank God for his great gifts – of each one of you to the other, and of the love he has given you to share.

We thank him for his rich blessings to you – and through you to so many.

And we ask him to continue to bless you, for many, many more happy years together.

Amen