**Address: George Rosendale**

Dear friends,

The grace and peace of Almighty God be with us all today. Amen.

John 3:16 was chosen by George Rosendale because it shows us the ‘pool of love’ that God has for all of us: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.’

**‘God’s pool of love’**

On the 24 August 1969, George Rosendale was ordained as a pastor of the Lutheran Church.

The 24 August 2019 marked the 50th anniversary since his ordination. I had the pleasure of handing him the letter of congratulations from our churchwide office in Adelaide. He read it and gently put it down on the table next to him … with head bowed and tears in his eyes, and mine too, I might add, he said: ‘Can’t be, can’t be’. He picked up the letter and read it again … put it down and said, ‘Can’t be!’

If he was able to see the crowd of people here today, I’m sure he’d say, ‘Can’t be!’

Your presence here demonstrates the impact he had on the lives of so many people.

And all this came about through his passion, sharing the gospel of love.

His calling began very early in his life as he recalls in *Colour Blind* his mother praying for him and her family in his very early days as a child. The seeds were sown when he was a child and he never departed from this. Today here in our own town, the seeds continue to be sown to the generations that have followed.

Being the victim of a Taipan snake bite – and a survivor – led him to make a lifetime commitment to serve God.

His early training in ministry included regular visits to central Australia along with ngathi Alick Cameron. Together they gained many insights from Pastor Albrecht. It was during these times their friendship with Albert Namitjira flourished.

The Lutheran Church has been described as a ‘sleeping giant’. George Rosendale did his best to wake that giant making a huge impact on Indigenous people right across the country.

To him the words of John 3:16 say it all. He was driven by this text describing it as ‘God’s pool of love’.

He was a ‘founding father’ of Wontulp Bi Buya, an Indigenous Theological College. He prepared much of the teaching material and through this left the Lutheran footprint all over the teachings of the college. Through this involvement and his hands-on teaching over many years, he has reached out and touched the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of people with the love of God. I recall Joan Kendricks, a devout Catholic saying: ‘I loved sitting at his feet hearing his simple and meaningful way of sharing the gospel’.

Rev George was passionate about and committed to sharing the gospel. In fact, he took commitment to another level. Once the commitment was made, he never wavered, despite many hardships and testing times. Especially challenging were those times from within his own denomination. How did he feel about the evacuation to Woorabinda as a young boy leaving Spring Hill in 1942 with nothing? He is one of those who returned in 1948 to begin building the new Hope Vale. Today we have 11 of those still living with us.

During the last 26 years, 2 of his children were called to their heavenly home, right in the prime of their lives, yet he remained steadfastly faithful. Many a lesser person may have had doubts that God was real, and maybe questioned if he even existed at all, but not this man.

The commitment he had made was binding on the rest of his life. His faithfulness to God and absolute trust that God’s ‘pool of love’ would get him through anything the world could throw at him was among his greatest strengths.

His beloved wife Maud stood beside him and faithfully supported him in his vocation, always keeping the home as a positive and loving environment for the family.

As a result of his commitment he earned a level of respect that was never questioned. He was trusted in every way by all people. Pastor George chose the texts we have heard today because they all point us back to the ‘pool of love’ that God has for everyone.

God loves the whole world:

He loved the Pharisee who questioned Jesus … and the Samaritan woman who questioned Jesus. He loved the man paralysed his entire life and the man born blind. He loved Peter who denied and Judas who betrayed him.

God so loved the whole world – loved us all sitting in the pews today. He loves our families, our friends, our neighbours. He loves the people who used to come to church but don’t anymore. He loves the people who were hurt by the church or lost their faith. He loves the people who have never darkened the door of a church. He loves the people who are hungry, and the people who feed the hungry, and the people who don’t care about the hungry as much as they should. He loves our brothers and sisters who are Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu – and no expectation that they accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. God loves all of us.

He wants us all to hear the words, ‘God loves you’. It is this message that gives us comfort today as we focus our thoughts on what is beyond the grave. We know that God takes care of the soul; we only look after the earthly body which is an empty shell. The soul belongs to the creator and he takes this back to himself.

Jesus Christ lived and died because God loved you and me. His love reaches out to us. Everyone is in his great plan of salvation; he wants you and me to receive the promise of eternal life. His love is everlasting and unconditional. It can’t be earned. In our sorrow today, let’s take hold of God’s love through Jesus to uphold us in our time of need.

This is the message our brother Pastor George shared over and over again.

When a person passes on to their heavenly home, it’s not unusual to hear it said, ‘He leaves big shoes to fill’. That maybe so, but the footprints George Rosendale have left are very clear to follow – a trailblazer leaving a pathway for others – which begs the question in a world where everyone wants to be a football star, is God is calling someone here to step up? George Rosendale led from the front; he led using God’s word and lived as an example to us all. His focus was always on Jesus.

Eight days before he died, as weak as he was, he reached out for my pen and paper, probably because writing took less energy than speaking, and wrote, ‘I thank God for everything’.

As we farewell our brother in Christ, we say, ‘See you later’ to a remarkable person who honoured God and fulfilled his God-given mission on this earth to the best of his ability. Rest in peace good and faithful servant.

We pray: Lord God, you give and you take away. Today you have called a servant back to your heavenly home. We know he is in your loving care as we also long to meet him and all your saints again one day. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.