

Just Jesus

Matthew 17:1-9

I love a good 'dad joke'. Are you familiar with any of these?

- Old accountants never retire; they just lose their balance.
- Old doctors never retire; they just lose their patience.
- Old bankers never retire; they just lose interest.

What about old preachers? Look to Pastor Phil. How would you complete the saying "Old preachers never retire; they just..."

"Old preachers never retire: they just go a little locum."

They're trained to keep talking, a little like Peter on the mountain when the amazing Transfiguration of Jesus takes place.

Let's pray...

Today is the day of Transfiguration. The day we hear of the foretaste of who Jesus truly is as the Son of God in glory. The day we see and hear who Jesus truly is, as true God and true human.

And today is the day that we thank God, as Pastor Phil completes his ministry among us, and as we thank both him and Ruth for their presence among us in ministry, and in ongoing witness and friendship. The good news is that they are not leaving us never to be seen again, but they are commencing a new chapter in their lives as Phil finishes here. Please join us for morning tea where we will be making our farewells and saying our thank you.

So what might the account of the Transfiguration say to us today?

We are all about to change seasons. We're all on the move. Transfiguration calls us from Epiphany to Lent. Ash Wednesday beckons (and we will gather for a service here at 7:30pm that day). And so we move from the season on the mount to the season on the plain, among the earth and the ashes. On the mountain of God, the disciples are given the most amazing glimpse of heaven in seeing Jesus in all his glory. They see that he is the one promised, as Moses

and Elijah
— key
people



representing
the Law and the Prophets who pointed to the coming
Messiah — are here now in the presence of God's Son,
whose heavenly appearance dazzles. The disciples are

in awe and wonder. They don't know what to do. Peter rambles. And God speaks, "This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him!"

God speaks and calls the disciples to listen... to listen to Jesus. Here in the presence of the Old Testament heroes representing the Word of God in the Law, and the Word of God in the prophets, the very Word of God to this point; God now calls them to listen anew to him. This is my Son. Listen to him in his Son. The change in season is also God's call to you and me to listen anew to the voice of Jesus.

In 2019 when I was ministering as sole pastor here, I felt the struggle of the load and of the time. It was difficult for me, and on 5th September 2019, I knocked on Pastor Phil's door and he kindly invited me in. First mistake Pastor Phil! 😊

I asked Pastor Phil if he might consider coming to help us for a time: "Come and preach the Word, Pastor Phil, that we might hear the voice of Jesus."

And you did. You may not at the time have realised how long or what this season would look like. But you heard my cry for help and God's call to minister among the people of St Paul's, and that's what you did. Pastor Phil, I know you love the voice and the Words of Jesus. You love the full story. The story of Jesus's death on the cross and his resurrection to new and eternal life. I've been privileged to see you enthusiastically listen and share the gospel and your insights in lots of places with lots of people. In your



words and by your kind and generous deeds, Phil and Ruth, you have brought us to Jesus, and to grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. You've also told us about God's Word of forgiveness for us when we fail. I know the joy it brings you to proclaim Jesus to us, here on the plains of life where most often we live our lives. Thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness and enthusiasm in showing us Jesus through your words, and through words and actions of you both, Ruth and Phil.

Matthew goes on to tell us what happened when the disciples heard the voice of God in the cloud:

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."

Matthew 17:6-7

The disciples are overawed by the voice of God, but Jesus comes to them and ministers to them, "Get up. Don't be afraid." Phil and Ruth, as you start this new chapter of retirement; as we as church enter a new season of building about to happen here at St Paul's; as the LCANZ faces a new future with new opportunities and challenges; as we face change and, while there is so much to look forward to, with change there is also some uncertainty and with uncertainty, sometimes there is fear. Jesus comes to you, just as he has come to us through you and your ministry, with the promise always to be with you, always to be with us; to lovingly bring his healing touch, to pick

us up when going forward is hard or scary or challenging, and to help us up and back on our feet when we are down. "Don't be afraid." It's a key message of God to his people. I'm with you. It's OK. I've got you. I'm here. Phil and Ruth, and St Paul's, in all you face in the season and seasons ahead of you, hear this promise. LCA, hear this promise for you on the journey ahead with all that it will bring... hear that Jesus bends down to touch us and gently call us by name. Don't be afraid, for I'm here with you. I am perfect love. And perfect love drives out fear.

And they looked up and saw no one but Jesus, himself alone. As Sue highlighted at the Pastoral Assistants meeting last Tuesday night, Matthew makes a strong point here. They looked up and saw no one but Jesus himself alone. Just Jesus. He is the answer. He's all we need. Pastor Phil, you always have had the strong desire to point us to this Jesus; true and glorious God of the mountain-top, and true and humble servant God of the lowest plain and person. Just Jesus. In Word and in servant action, you have pointed us to the one thing... well, the one *person* necessary. Jesus. Just Jesus. Thank you. Let's all commit to doing the same. To follow in the footsteps of disciples who have gone before us and to encourage one another, not only here in this community, but wherever we go; and let's make a point of shining the light of love and grace and hope in Jesus for the whole LCA NZ.

For Jesus takes the disciples back down the mountain, to where he will go to show the love of God and the fullness of the gospel. Jesus comes down the mountain and prepares for the valley of the shadow of death, for you and for me and all people. He goes resolutely to Jerusalem, for and among the people of the world in desperate need of a Saviour; people like you and me who know the highest highs and the lowest lows. People like us in the LCA, struggling to get along but with hope to move into the new season as we follow Christ. Jesus came to earth to be among and to rescue people; to make disciples of all nations. To give his life as a ransom for many. To change the world.



So, when you are on the mountain, hear the voice of God say to you, to us, "Here is my beloved Son. Listen to him!" When you are afraid, know that Jesus is already there with you, always touching you with his love and saying "Don't be afraid. Get up and follow me." And together, let us in this new season go back down the mountain and into our lives, with their new and changing seasons; but with the same God who comes to change the world by saving it. Proclaim Jesus. Pray for workers in his harvest. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, who makes change in and through us. Phil and Ruth, God goes with you, and so do our thanks, our prayers, our love.

People of St Paul's, journey with Jesus and make him known as we hear God say to us, "This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him." Be his change in the world.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/z2TmXTbqaEg>