

Sermon

St Peter's

19th February 2023

Feast of the Transfiguration

'I was Carried'

One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and
Across the sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene I noticed
two sets of footprints in the sand; One belonged to me, and the other
to the Lord. When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked
back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the
path of my life, There was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest
and saddest times in my life

This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,

You would walk with me all the way;

But I have noticed that during the
most troublesome times in my life,

There is only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why in times when I
needed you the most, you should leave me.

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious
child. I love you, and I would never,

never leave you during your times of trial and suffering.

When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you.

Good morning. It is good to be with you again this morning, here in the house of the Lord. It is good to be back preaching again, after my recent absence due to injury.

As you are aware, four and a half months ago, while away in Gippsland on my cousin's farm, in a moment of carelessness, shortly after my father's passing, I came off a dirt bike. Now the first thing I remember was the pain and spasm in my right leg, that in the accident got caught inside the bike. My second memory was the words of loving concern from my wife Lucy and daughter Mary, 'He's fine. It's just a sprain.' My third memory was the very different conclusion reached by the medical staff of nearby Traralgon hospital. 'Serious trauma', 'spiral fracture', 'impressive x-ray, 'top ten of all time at this hospital'. But my favourite was the orthopaedic surgeon: 'I have one question for you. Do you want to walk again?' 'Yes' I said. To which he replied, handing me a clipboard, with a form on it. 'Then sign here. We need to pin your leg. We operate in the morning'. The reality of the situation began to dawn on me. I went to bed that night with a knot in my leg, and in my stomach.

Throughout my life, I try to pray. But I prayed especially hard to the Lord Jesus that night, for his presence, for salvation. While I knew his presence with me at the time, through it all, it has only when I have looked back, and reflected on my experience, that I have come to see the arms of the Lord, carrying me, when I could not walk on my own.

The Lord's promise to us is not that we will not fall. But that, when we fall, he will be there, to carry us.

How did I get back, from there, to here?

The same way that I got back from all of those places I have found myself lost in the past.

In the arms of the Lord. The Good Shepherd.

I was carried.

At my commissioning seven years ago, the scripture reading I gave you, from the book of proverbs was:

'Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct your path.'

Today, I return to this ministry, and to this message.

In a world that trusts only in itself, you and I are those, whose trust is in the Lord.

The Good shepherd, he is with us, and he is powerful to deliver us, from the badness of the world.

So that we can now say, in the words of the Apostle Paul,

‘For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

On Christmas day each year we hear that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.

The grace of God, that brings us to our knees.

The kingdom of God, that has dawned upon the world.

This kingdom, of grace and peace, of righteousness and love, is the hope of the world. The hope of every human heart. The hope of all people.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light no darkness can extinguish.

It is not yet the day. It is the dawn of the new day. But already now the light of God's future kingdom, shines into the world. Shines into our hearts.

With the dawn of salvation. With the light of hope.

And all who repent and believe, all who give themselves completely to this future that has come, already now live, in the future. In the kingdom of God. With hope in their hearts.

Already now live, forgiven and free.

In a world made new.

With love in their hearts.

The love of God, that overflows, to the world.

In the words of Van Morrison, 'I'm real, real gone. I got hit by a bow and arrow. Got me down to the very marrow. And I'm real, real gone.'

Some people say, you can make it on your own. You can make it if you try. But I know better now. You can't stand up alone. And that is why. I'm real, real gone.'

Rev'd Jon Chamberlain

Vicar