

Today marks the end by Sundays of the first third of the year. It also marks the last Sunday of my 69th year.... I begin my 70th year on Tuesday at 4:30pm. For what it's worth, I was born under the skylight in one of the primary classrooms at Columba College. The previous principal showed me the place. How many here were born at Hill Jack maternity home? I'm told over 10 000 babies were born there during its life. As I begin my 70th year, thankfully I have plenty models of those who've gone before. They've shown me it's more not less fun. To prepare me for the fun I did defeat a couple of whippersnappers on the golf course this week. I won't mention who but one's name begins with M and one with B.

I had planned to speak from the Acts account where Philip just happened to meet a man from Ethiopia who just happened to be reading from Isaiah as he rode home. It just happened that he couldn't understand what he was reading and it just so happened the Philip was passing by. On hearing Isaiah explained he just happened to be ready to respond to Jesus and just happened to want to be baptised and a pool just happened to be beside the road they were travelling on. Did it just happen that way?

But I've felt this nudge to go back and consider where we've been this year – not every sermon, not every service to be sure but asking what are the key principles that have been raised thus far.

And of course the by-product of this that the Red Cross choir members will get a review of what we've been up to.

To the choir - thank you for gracing us with your presence and gifts today. I thought I needed to stand with our RSA choir members on Wednesday so a few Scotts went to the Dawn Service, then on to the Green Island service while the choir was elsewhere and then we (Trudy and I) went to the RSA choir concert on Wednesday night. This was an outstanding display of the choir's skills and those of the other guests as well. I came out of the Town Hall walking on air... Thanks to Trevor, Paul, Cyril, Ken and Mel even if none of them are here today. In addition Erica Wilden, who grew up in this community, played in the Mosgiel Brass Band. And Joel Wilden played in the Pipe Band at the Green Island Service – I'm sure I've left someone out.

Talking of a third of the year, over the first 5 weeks of 2018, the preacher was a young man who isn't even a third of my age... young Sam Young. And what a delightful young man he was.

He took some of us (it was January after all) on a journey through Hebrews and the big idea for the last message was, 'to encourage us to take up God's offer of spiritual rest, in order that we may be equipped to boldly journey on this epic road trip we call the Life of Faith.'

Epic road trip – Sam went on a few of those while he was here and others joined him.

A member of the congregation asked him if the journey had an end. He replied, **'it's a good question, and there is a destination in mind. You see our road trip of faith; this epic journey will ultimately end in Heaven, where we're fully restored and where we're made fully like Jesus Christ. In the meantime while on earth, we're with God's enabling, striving and journeying towards this fully redeemed and restored state, we're becoming like Jesus, slowly but surely, day by day and week by week.'**

A wise answer; to follow that up we focussed on the question: Why on earth am I here?

That's a useful question with which to be confronted whatever our age or stage.

Over the next five weeks we considered the habits of a highly missional Christians?

I loved the title of the first message, 'Living questionable lives...' As a 'prone to being judgmental person', my observation is that lots of people seem to live questionably but I'm not so clear when it comes to me.

However that's not what Julian had in mind, he challenged us by raising this question:

'Has anyone ever asked you a question about your life that has led to a discussion about faith issues? Living a good middle-class life, keeping the lawn and garden tidy and the car clean, playing sport, watching TV, listening to music and driving to work... is a good life... but it's not exactly intriguing. It probably won't generate much curiosity from others. It's just too normal.' So the aim was to challenge being nice.

We then spent the next 4 weeks speaking of the five habits of highly missional people – missional in the sense of carrying on the work Jesus came to do.

You know these off by heart, they're above the mirror in your bathroom or written where you work or prepare meals or drive your car – aren't they?

What are they?

1. I will bless three people this week, at least one of whom is not yet a follower of Jesus
2. I will eat with three people this week, at least one of whom is not yet a follower
3. I will spend at least one period of the week learning Jesus.
4. I will spend at least one period of the week listening for the Spirit's voice.
5. I will journal throughout the week all the ways I alerted others to what God was doing in Jesus when he sent him to this world.

Bless others

Eat with others

Learn from Jesus

Listen to his Spirit

Record how we live.

How's it going - time for a report back session - but not today!

In some ways we were seeking to lay a base on which we can build this year.

Then it was into our wonderful Easter season beginning on Palm Sunday in green as David Anderson provoked us to think about what we would have done that day. We worked our way through the colours of Easter – it was powerful and meaningful. Remember the blaze of yellow as we celebrated Jesus lives! and then Randal and Mathew round off that season by looking at people and events after Jesus rose from death.

Oh yes I've forgotten, there was that tough but rewarding day some of us (a good number I felt) spent with Mark Powell, the point of which was to give us resources as we seek to engage with those around us. I was looking at some of the PowerPoints this week – truly there is much to work with and build on. And then there was the great night we spent with Ebony and Caleb as they shared their summer journeys with us.

So my next task was to ask out of all the Scripture passages we looked over the first 16 Sundays of the year were there any that stood out, that could be the bricks to be laid on the foundation as we seek to live before others and before God for the remaining two thirds of the year.

Texts for today:

From Sam:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

From 'Why on earth am I here?'

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

From our five missional purposes

Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6)

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15)

Sharing meals together on a regular basis is one of the most sacred practices we can engage in as believers. Missional hospitality is a tremendous opportunity to extend the Kingdom of God.

Randal introduced us to the key moments in Peter's transformation

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Challenge from Matthew

Are there things in your life that are not built on the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him the dead?

So the question for us is this?

What are we going to do about it?

It seems fitting after last Sunday when we focussed on some lessons from Eric Liddell's story, and after we celebrated the conclusion Dorothy Marsden's race on Tuesday that we consider how to run our own race, the one marked out for us; that we commit ourselves afresh to run the race of highly missional Jesus people who in the power of the Holy Spirit produce lasting fruit to the glory of God and his son Jesus.

Are you ready, set....