

Today marks the end of 75 weeks of what we've called See23.

We've had this vision, it was a year and a half ago that we started, we finished off a thousand brave days.

And then we've had these 75 weeks of See23.

We've had seven strategic keys, they're on the screen there.

We've had this in our mind as we've made decisions as a church, spiritual formation, next 100, big Sundays, mission or push, next generation, forward press and ministry mobilization.

We started off the year in February looking at all these aspects of church life, and I think we've experienced God's grace as we've moved forward in all of them.

And then alongside of these, we've had four personal habit goals to be implemented weekly over the 75 weeks.

Supp, salt, scripture, Sunday.

Supp coming from the old King James revelation idea that Jesus wants to supp with us.

He wants to just spend time with us.

So we were suggesting if we're going to be the church that God wants us to be, made up of the people who are growing in Christ's likeness as he wants us to be, it's going to involve supping with the Lord.

Just time with him, however that works for you.

And then it's also going to be involving being salty.

Matthew 5 style, light of the world, salt of the world.

We're looking for good works prepared in advance for us to do and to share the gospel in word and deed.

And then scripture is so important, so we've been encouraging one another to spend time in the word of God, daily, weekly, and Sunday.

We made a big deal about Sunday being an important gathering of the saints for encouragement,

for corporate worship together, for the manifestation of the Spirit's gifting that we might serve and bless one another in Jesus' name.

And in all of this, we've been asking the Lord to reveal his purposes to us as a church.

We've been trying to say, Lord, if there's like a pivot, there's some big step that you want us to do as a church.

We want to listen, we're open.

So that's really been what See23 has been about, and today we bring it together.

So, today we're in Matthew 16 and 17, a philia read for a 16.

We'll get to that in a minute.

We're gonna start in chapter 17.

The disciples have been with Jesus for some time.

I'm not exactly sure how long, but they've been with him on this three year, 24-7 apprenticeship programme.

And Jesus takes his disciples to the north of Israel in a particularly lush part of that country.

It's about 40 kilometres west and a bit north from Galilee, a place called Caesarea Philippi.

It's a beautiful part of the world.

I'm fortunate enough to have been there some time ago.

And the downside of this beautiful spot with this cave and a stream and a spring is that it was known by the pagans as the gates of hell at the foot of Mount Hermon.

So, though a beautiful spot and a spot that's very important because Jesus asked the disciples a monumentally important question there that we will get to as well in a minute, it was also known as a deeply spiritual location, the gates of the underworld for the pagans.

So, let me read from chapter 17 of Matthew's Gospel.

After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, the brother of James, and led them up

a high mountain by themselves.

There he was transfigured before them, his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Just then, there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it's good for us to be here.

If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.

While he was still speaking, a bright light, a bright cloud rather, covered them and a voice from the cloud said, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased.

Listen to him.

When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified, but Jesus came and touched them.

Get up, he said.

Don't be afraid.

When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

An amazing part of the New Testament, the transfiguration.

Peter is experiencing it, and he's at a bit of a loss to know what to do.

The veil has been taken away.

He's got a good idea that Jesus is special.

He's seen Jesus perform all sorts of miraculous deeds, but this time, it's different.

The veil has been taken away.

They see Jesus for who he is.

He is God.

He is the son of God.

He's from heaven.

He is truly glorious beyond description.

And another thing, he knows Moses and Elijah.

Jesus is the real deal.

Talk about See23.

Talk about seeing things the way they truly are.

In my life, I've found it surprisingly rare to hear of a person give a testimony of coming to Christ, and the journey they took to get to Christ was because they were convinced by a watertight argument.

I don't know about you or whether you are sitting here today and you can say, I sat down with a person and they just convinced me for faith in Christ.

Now, it's not as though it's not used, those truths, because there's a lot of evidence to back up who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

But my experience is consistently, when I hear someone's testimony, it is that God reveals his glory to people.

God wins people's hearts to him with the love of Christ for them.

Truth, in a way, is transfigured before people.

And they see.

Amazing grace style.

I once was lost, but now I'm found.

I was blind, but now I see.

When I'm preparing a message, as I get to do, and it's a great privilege for Christmas Day, some weeks ago I was preparing, and I find it always difficult, because you don't know who's going to be in the room or what their background is and what their understanding of the Bible is, of the Gospel.

But I always know my job, or anyone preaching on Christmas Day, is to talk about the greatness of Jesus and what he did in the Gospel.

What he accomplished through his birth, perfect life and death on the cross, and rising from the grave.

I don't convince as a preacher, someone how to become a Christian or why they should be.

I put it out there, and then God truly does a work in his timing.

And you know, if you know me, I'm not a hardline Calvinist.

I've fought for the defence of the Gospel all my life, but I'm just more and more struck.

I can't convince anyone to become a Christian.

It is a work of God.

Christ must be transfigured.

His truth must be transfigured before a person.

Amen?

It's a work of grace, a work of God, that people see before they come to faith, or in the process of coming to faith.

The Jesus of the Christmas story, Jesus whose name maybe for a person is nothing more than a swear word, Jesus whose face is often known to be on a stained glass window in an old church.

Maybe he's hanging on a cross.

For someone to get saved, to be born again, they need to have all that taken away.

And just see him, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, saviour of the world, Lord of the cosmos, high and lifted up, the one who died for their sins.

And this is how we come to know Christ.

Have you experienced your own version of the transfiguration?

Have you experienced seeing Jesus for who he is?

See, 23, 24, 25, whatever.

But we need to see him.

And our response is so typically like the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6, when he sees God in his glory, he says, woe to me, I am a man of unclean lips.

I am so low and impure in contrast to the holiness, the glory that I am beholding.

We need this.

We need a revelation of who Jesus is.

And it's really what this whole See23 has been about for us as a church.

Lord God, reveal who you are, what your will is for us.

May we see Jesus for who he is.

Six days before he took Peter, James and John up to the mountain.

Jesus is at the foot of the mountain, Mount Hermon, outside the gates of hell, it would seem.

And Jesus chose to ask his disciples the most important question I think ever asked on earth.

I think it's the most important question that you will ever hear, asked of you.

And the same for me.

And I feel you read it out to us in verse 13.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say the son of man is?

They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

But what about you?

He asked, who do you say I am?

Simon Peter got it right.

He answered, you're the Messiah, the son of the living God.

And Jesus replied, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my father in heaven.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades nearby will not overcome it.

I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

On this rock, what is the rock?

Now, there's been theological debate about that question, but I think the rock is a revelation of who Jesus is.

Amen?

The revelation of Jesus as the Christ of God, the saviour of the world, the son of the living God, that's what Jesus can build his church upon, a personal transformative, utterly transformative experience of the transfiguration to see Jesus for who he is on this rock, Jesus, Christ of God, long-awaited Messiah, saviour of the world.

On this revelation, this rock, Jesus can build a church.

When people see, Jesus can build.

I was driving to church June, I think it was June last year.

We were just coming out of COVID.

And I was praying, saying, Lord, what do you want to say to us in the next season?

We were finishing off this idea of A Thousand Brave Days, which is a three-year vision, coming into the newly built ministry center.

And I felt like, it's totally subjective, hey, but I felt like God said, See23, seek me for what I have for you next.

And so we sort of built this.

This idea of See23 and spiritual habits that would be part of us becoming the type of people who would see more clearly on a daily basis who Jesus is and what he's calling us to be and do as a church.

And then there was this idea of illiteration, sub-salt scripture Sunday, time with the Lord, time serving the world, time in the Word, and time gathered as the body.

And so we come to the end of the 75-week vision, and I've asked lots of people, what did God say to us?

What was it?

What did we see?

We've been talking about it.

We've all had the opportunity to seek the Lord as his church.

We're a Baptist church, the congregational government.

We've all got a right to hear from the Lord.

We're the priesthood of all believers together.

And as I heard people, I didn't get any one thing.

There was no absolute clarity for me until at a deacons' meeting, I think, last week.



I felt like the clarity was crystal clear, and I felt like God was saying, it was right there at the start.

The vision was, once a person is born again, I'm looking for godly habits.

Sub-Salt Scripture Sunday was the vision, was the thing that he wanted us to do, and I think it's still the thing he wants us to do because I bet you not many of us nailed that, because it's hard.

I truly believe the vision that God has for us as a church is he's looking for us to be a 1% church.

You might say, what happened to the 99%?

What happened?

By the grace of God, 1% more consistent per week, 1% more generous per week, 1% more committed to habits that produced life, and make no mistake, we can't do that in our own strength, like some positive thinking book that you find on Amazon.

I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about growing into Christ likeness and the journey of faith by the grace of God.

It takes effort in grace.

It does.

Our vision for as a church is faithful and fruitful.

Sounds general?

Yeah, it is.

Love God, love others, make disciples.

Be faithful and fruitful over time.

Make disciples one at a time, typically.

Jesus could do it 12 at a time, or we tend to do it one at a time.

One day at a time, by grace, one year at a time.

Can I encourage you with this truth?

We have epic moments in our lives, like the transfiguration.

Of course, there's never going to be quite that.

That was quite unique, but like that, where we see Jesus.

They are so special.

They're so required, aren't they?

Mountain top experiences.

We need them.

But the transfiguration happened to Peter, James, and John after they left everything, committed to follow Jesus day by day with the Master.

When you think about it, the transfiguration happened on just another trip north to the garden, didn't it?

It was just another day in following Jesus.

It just happened that that allowed them to be in the place where Jesus turned up and was transfigured.

Peter had, I think it would be fair to say, in the New Testament, more high-voltage spiritual experiences than basically anyone.

But after the resurrection and the birth of the early church, it was Peter who wrote these amazing words in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 3.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

It was a work of God.

He opened our heart and mind.

Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises.

So that through them, the promises, you may participate in the divine nature.

Yeah, we can become more and more like Jesus, our hero, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this reason, one percenters, for this 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, here the one percent, in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive, because you could be ineffective and unproductive if you didn't move more towards Christ.

Ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but whoever does not have them is near sighted, they don't see clearly, even blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, for if you do these things, you will never stumble.

And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ.

We must be, as a vision, we must be intentional about godly rhythms and holy habits that are learned and relearned day by day.

See23 means, second Peter one, faith developed over time into goodness and knowledge, self-control and perseverance developed into godliness, mutual affection and love.

Amen?

That's what Peter tells us.

Day by day, the Christian life is a winding journey in which we see more and more clearly, and at times, see a little bit less clearly.

And then we come back in and we see more clearly the goodness and glory of God in Christ as his people.

I will put it to you today, that See23, as we wrap up this idea that we've been in for 18 months, it

really means answering that question every day, every morning, that question.

Who do you say that I am?

Jesus asks us.

Who do you say that I am?

Seeing clearly, with heavenly revelation comes, not exclusively, but I think honestly, it comes powerfully from supping with the Lord, doesn't it?

Supp with the Lord?

From stepping out and serving Him in His grace as a salty, light-filled person.

It comes, heavenly revelation comes from studying the Word.

It does.

If you're not in the Scriptures, it's unlikely that you're going to have another mountaintop experience.

And it comes from gathering as these people, not only on Sunday, but Sunday is important.

It's an important part of it.