



**I Just Don't Get It**  
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Year A, Creation 1  
Matthew 16: 21-28  
3 September 2023

Today we're seated in the round, it's not the usual way we structure our worship space. For those of you on Livestream it may mean things are less immediately visible to you. It may be a little irritating, feel a bit uncomfortable, disorienting or unsettling. If so, let's be aware of that.

On this first Sunday in the Season of Creation such awareness of discomfort might be important to pay attention to, a means to dislodge us from our complacency.

We have before us today a pool piled with blocks of ice, melting ice. We live in an earth warming, melting ice cap, sea rising world. Things are out of balance. We're utterly dependent upon the finely tuned fragile resilience of this unique earthly ecosystem. The one we've no part in creating yet have active part in dismantling.

I see it, I hear it, I know it – but I just don't get it.

I live near a number of beaches. One of them is Long Bay. About five years ago there was a line of posts, driven into the sand, two metres or so on the seaward side of the sand dunes. Linked by rope they were there to protect the dunes from human foot traffic. A year or two later, I noticed the posts were gradually being washed away. A year or so after that the unplanted dunes were gone, the tide line was now the planted sand dunes. Now the tide line is the trees that once were behind the planted sand dunes.

I see it, I hear it, I know it – but I just don't get it.

Out of control fires, searing heat waves, unprecedented wet weather events, flooding, Pacific islands disappearing into the sea.

I see it, I hear it, I know it – but I just don't get it.

Last week in the gospel Peter heard Jesus, saw Jesus, knew and confessed Jesus as Messiah. Peter was named as the rock the foundation stone.

This week Matthew's sparse wording tells what being Messiah means. This is not what Peter reckoned on. This week Peter is the stumbling block, he doesn't get it.

Jesus, God blessed, God indwelling, Messiah maybe, but like us he walks the way of suffering, vulnerable to life, vulnerable to the power dynamic of human systems. Not resisting this leads to death. With the addendum that's not the end of the story, not completely.

To incarnate as Jesus did is to live fully within the world **as it is**. Being God blessed doesn't mean not suffering. In blessing and in suffering the grace of God is with us. And incarnation happens in this creation, the only place with inter web of elements, subtly and suitably balanced to support our life form and the multitude of life forms that dwell here.

I see, I hear, I know that I don't bring my life into being and that most of the functions that happen to sustain my body, my life happen without my conscious knowing but I still don't get it.

What would it be to 'get it'? I think it requires giving something up or maybe letting something go, something fundamental. To use religious speak to be heart changed.

Incarnation, living, revealing **is** only possible because of the sustaining life of this world. Getting it asks me to give up resisting the vulnerability of this, to expose myself to this raw truth.

Getting it is being willing to have my heart broken open. Giving up life (our life that one we possess and name as our own) for life.

For this to be made real we can't stay the same, incarnate the same. **That** way of living and being reveals **our** inner desires and grasping. This other way of living and being reveals the enervating life of God

that we participate in. We can't lay our hands on it, it's not ours to possess or own, it's with us and all of creation, it is life.

The grace of God with us isn't a free pass to an easy life. Rather it's an invitation for us to live more consciously present, awake and alive to the world and how we live in it.

The grace of God sustains us as we experience as suffering the limitations, constraints and reality of rubbing up against the real time life of the world. The grace of God is with us in our physical vulnerability and in our awakening to the effect human priorities has visited upon the living systems around us.

What is it to live in the world conscious of our being God-sustained people? In the words of Clarissa Pinkola Estes to live as needed, awakened souls who show up and shine as we navigate the times we find ourselves in, the times we're made for.

Let me turn to the wisdom of Wayfinding Leadership. Emerging from a te ao Maori worldview, wayfinding wisdom is expressed in the complex of skills and attributes of those who've directed tiny craft across vast sea distances between scattered and far flung islands. Who've navigated by reading the movement and changes of the natural world and of the people on the craft with them. The approach is quite different.

When a journey is embarked on it has a destination but the destination is not *the* purpose of the journey. There are many layers to the purpose for which a journey is taken. Of course there's a common purpose, they work together on the journey, yet each person on the journey embarks with a different purpose. The journey itself may have a purpose of influencing in different ways. As the journey unfolds these purposes will shift and change. A purpose, Wayfinding wisdom claims, "is never static but a vision for *becoming*. The destination is not 'out there' somewhere we are not. The future is in each moment. Purpose is to become the kind of people we want to be as we journey.

Wayfinding requires [us to] become 'explorers of our world' seeking to discover and shine light upon that which is not seen. To become

an explorer of the world is to set sail beyond the compass of our existing knowledge and to traverse uncharted waters in ourselves and in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

To navigate these times we are in, to be the kind of people we want to be, aware the future is in each moment we need to be honest about who we are, with all our foibles, not out of fear, be fixedly infallible. Peter today and pretty consistently, rock of the church or not, reveals with great enthusiasm his fickleness and frailty. Even so, he is included and keeps on participating.

Is admitting to ‘not getting it’ frailty or honesty? Being willing to ‘get it’ is risky, it cracks open our heart, reveals our vulnerability to life on this planet. It’s scary. We need companions with us as we navigate the changed waters and lifescapes of our world. Maybe especially to compassionately challenge us those many times we see it, hear it, know it and are too afraid to face what ‘getting it’ asks of us. Companions who stand with us as we’ve courage to risk the vulnerability of a changed heart, of being changed, with us as we learn anew how to navigate our life in and of this world, for we’re not as we were.

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<sup>1</sup> Spiller, C., Barclay-Kerr, H. and Panoho, J. (2017) *Wayfinding leadership: Ground-breaking wisdom for developing leaders*. Wellington Aotearoa New Zealand: Huia, 41, 42.