

**SERMON AT 7.30 PM HOLY COMMUNION (CW)
AT CHRIST CHURCH, TOTLAND BAY ON
WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2018 (ASH
WEDNESDAY) BY JAMES COOK**

**Readings: 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10 and Matthew 6.1-6,
16-21**

Title: ‘Do it quietly!’

Aim: To help us observe Lent without show.

Last Sunday, we heard the story of the Transfiguration of our Lord. We learned that sometimes God intervenes in our lives in a spectacular way. The closest followers of Jesus, Peter, James and John, were arrested by the sight of Jesus shining with a brilliant white light and the sound of God’s voice speaking from heaven. Perhaps not as striking as the Transfiguration, but there might have been memorable moments in your life when God seemed very close and very real.

Much of our lives is taken up, however, with meeting and serving God in ways that are not spectacular, but they are essential aspects of being disciples of Jesus. When we are training our children, we encourage them to do their homework, to practice their sporting or musical skills, or whatever else is important about growing up, but we say: “Just get on with it, and please, do it quietly! (Even

practising the piano does not have to be at double forte volume!)

Lent is a season when, as adults, we are expected to get on with the business of learning to be disciples of Jesus and, where possible, to do it quietly.

You know the phrase ‘Not if, but when’. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus does not say, “If you give to the needy, if you pray, if you fast...” He says, “When you give to the needy, when you pray, when you fast...” He expects us to get on with the business of being Christian disciples and to go on learning the basics, without fuss and without showing off. In fact, he asks that our giving, our prayers and our fasting go unnoticed by others and become so ingrained in our patterns of living that even we hardly notice. “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” he says.

Jesus adds to his advice about giving, praying and fasting some advice about how we are motivated to do these things habitually and unobtrusively. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...” he says, “Store up treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We could say, “Life is more enjoyable when giving rather than getting.” What tragic consequences result, on the other hand, from trying to get, rather than to give – in our

personal relationships, our political policies and even in the life of our churches!

During Lent, we do not celebrate as we do at festival times like Christmas and Easter. We use the space in an otherwise busy calendar to spend time reflecting upon our relationship with God and drawing closer to him. I have recommended spiritual reading, Lent Study Groups and special aids to Bible study and prayer. The extra opportunities to give to the needy through Lent Brunches and the Bishop's Lent Appeal for refugees have been publicised. May we see these as opportunities not to get more from God – to store up treasures on earth, but to give more to God and our neighbour – to store up treasures in heaven. Amen.