

Reflection on Ephesians 5:8-14 and John 9:1-7

Fourth Sunday in the Season of Lent

22 March 2020 Rev. Christine Gilbert

Live as children of light, the Epistle to the Christians in Ephesus implores us, for the fruit of light is found in all that is *good and right and true*. And this, of course, is contrasted with the unfruitful works of darkness.

One of the more frightening aspects of the pandemic racing around the world is the *dark and hidden nature* of the virus. It works in secret. The so-called enemy cannot be seen with the naked eye, and so, the items we share, the warm touch we are used to giving one another, and the spaces between us no longer feel safe. Instead of holding the possibility of friendship, they have become things to avoid—at least for the time being. (May we not get used to the self-isolation and social distancing!)

But the virus itself is not the only thing lurking in the shadows of these days. The threat has exposed attitudes and behaviours in us that have revealed an Australia not at its best.

Stress and intolerance have led the way in our relating at times. Personally, I've been overwhelmed with information and anxiety and have overwhelmed those around me with incessant processing and talk about what *might be*. And listening to the obviously Asian barista and server speak in their mother tongue at a café, I noticed feelings of suspicion and prejudice flutter by within me.

Thankfully “everything exposed by the light becomes visible” and herein lies our hope and the possibility for transformation. Rather than hiding what may be understandable reactions—at any time, but especially now—we can acknowledge them, bring them out into the light of our awareness, where they need not be a source of shame *but the seeds of healing and transfiguration*.

Lent and autumn are seasons that encourage relinquishment and letting go. Like the golden rain tree going to seed, the Spirit wind helps us to shed the old in order to make room for the new... a dying that we might be raised to newness of life. In collecting the branches for worship today, I noticed how easily the seed pods fall from the branches... they seem to let go willingly, eagerly in their quest to fall to the ground so that they might give birth to something new. May it be so in us.

For every day there are new opportunities to trust God amidst the fear, to express kindness and generosity though we may feel like being selfish and withholding, to find new ways of expressing warmth and friendship to those around us.

This can be a productive and growing time despite—or *perhaps because of*—the restrictions and difficult realities.

So, like the man blind from birth, we are in need of vision... we need a way of seeing that enables us to recognise God’s realm of love on the horizon before us in order that we might choose to move towards it in all that we do.

The man born blind was told by Jesus to wash in the pool of Siloam which the Gospel tells us means Sent—as always, a symbolic detail on the part of the evangelist. For Jesus is the Sent One from God, and he was sent by God not to condemn but to love and save us. Like the man in the Gospel, we, too, have been washed in the pool of the Sent One. In our baptism,

we are immersed in Christ. In our going under, we die with Christ and are brought up again that we might now live in, with and for Christ.

Baptism sets us out on a journey of love. It gives us a different way of *seeing and being* in the world.

“I am the light of the world,” says Jesus. This sacred light lives deep within each of us and is able to illumine the loving path. The more we are in touch with the Light, tending it with our stillness and prayer, the brighter it shines within and before us. And on this path, the opportunities to be people of light abound.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

An invitation to greater self-awareness

Rather than hiding what may be understandable reactions—at any time, but especially now—we can acknowledge them... bring them out into the light of our awareness... where they need not be a source of shame *but seeds of healing and change*.

- What shadowy attitudes and behaviours have you noticed in yourself recently?
- How might they be seeds of healing and change for you?

Exploring this season of growth

Every day there are new opportunities to trust God amidst the fear, to express kindness and generosity though we may feel like being selfish and withholding, to find new ways of expressing warmth and friendship to those around us. This can be a productive and growing time despite—or *perhaps because of*—the restrictions and difficult realities.

- How have you experienced these weeks as a productive and growing time?
- What invitations to love for yourself do you sense at this time?

Exploring a different way of seeing and being

Like the man in the Gospel, we, too, have been washed in the pool of the Sent One. In our baptism, we have died with Christ that we might now live in, with and for Christ. Baptism sets us out on a journey of love. It gives us a different way of *seeing and being* in the world.

- What difference does your baptism into Christ make for you?
- How does your friendship with God give you a different way of seeing and being? What alternative perspectives and actions does it nurture in you?

Tending the Light within

“I am the light of the world,” says Jesus. This sacred light lives deep within each of us and is able to illumine the loving path. The more we are in touch with the Light, tending it with our stillness and prayer, the brighter it shines within and before us.

- How are you tending the Light within you in this season?
- What are you noticing about yourself? about your friendship with God and others?