

*Sermon preached by Revd Rachel McDougall*

*St Paul's Canterbury*

*Lent 4A*

*Sunday 21 March 2020*

Change brings upheaval.

This is as true for us as it was for the man born blind who sees. There is upheaval for the one who was blind, for all around him and for all of them in how they see or do not see Jesus.

The irony is that the blind man is healed and sees and then in the face of opposition sees more and more clearly at a different level.

He begins to understand who Jesus is.

Everyone else who questions him, his neighbours, the Pharisees, the other Jews, even his parents become more and more blind by fear and the change expected of them.

They are unprepared for the light of the world.

The more agitated they get the clearer and calmer the one who was blind is.

He becomes the one that recognises that God is at work here. Though I was blind, now I see.

We are in a time ourselves where we can't see the way ahead in this time of upheaval, yet there are pointers ahead.

We will cease to meet physically from tomorrow. Yet will not cease from being with each other through God's presence with us and the Holy Spirit who breathes between us.

We will change how we meet each other and perhaps this will open us up to see things differently. Perhaps this is an opportunity to learn how to be church in a different way, just as the once blind man does.

When he's tossed out of the synagogue he is met by Jesus, he sees and believes in him.

This is a time when as the children of light we learn how to be church in a different way, to slow down, to reflect, to listen and to learn how to be connected to each other and the community around.

We will feel the loss of being with each other physically. Yet even in the valley of shadows you are with us O God and your rod and staff comfort us.

This is a time to learn to see how God's love remains with us always even if we don't feel it.

We can learn to be with each other through phone calls and messages and email, through facebook and you-tube and above all in prayer.

Take your 'in contact' and pray for 5 people each day.

Read your bible, pray your prayers, ring each other and reach out to one another and to those in your neighbourhood.

Through all these ways and more we will learn to experience God through each other and in a different pace of life.

Yet somehow in the midst of it, God's love will still be around us.

So trust in the love of our God come what may.

As we hold each other in prayer we are still the body of Christ.

We are still Children of light.

We can each be kind and loving witnessing to our God of love.

Now is the time to be still, to listen and to pray, to look for the coming of the dawn and the one who has gone before us who died and rose again for us in love and for love.

Jesus who is with us always.

*And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still.*

*And listened more deeply.*

*Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.*

*Some met their shadows.*

*And the people began to think differently.*

*And the people healed.*

*And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.*

*And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and*

*dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.*

*Kitty O'Meara*

*Lections:*

*1 Sam 16.1-13*

*Psalm 23*

*Ephesians 5.8-14*

*John 9.1-41*