

**Shine as a light in the world.**

Fourth in a Lenten series on prayer

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor  
Fourth Sunday in Lent — 30 March 2014  
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*1 Samuel 16:1 – 13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8 – 14, John 9:1 – 41*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The rugby season has started. Fantastic! It's a great game rugby and a great spectator sport. I remember long Saturday afternoons watching my brothers play rugby and cheering and screaming from the sidelines. There was always plenty to see, plenty to get excited about. For those who don't know, a ruck is when a player goes down with the ball and then just about everybody else falls on top of them and tries to rack the ball out with their feet. Well that's how it was played in Newcastle twenty years ago. My brothers would come home from the Saturday game with amazing marks all over their bodies, all from being in a ruck. The ref only had two set eyes and lots to concentrate on. In a ruck things are hidden from our sight. A rugby ruck is a dark place.

Darkness is talked about in our gospel today and it is all about not seeing clearly. Not seeing clearly is not just confined to First Century religious leaders like the Pharisees. We have all experienced not seeing clearly. Let me just give you a few examples.

In our relationships there are place of darkness. David knows some things about me that I am very unaware of and I know things about him. One of those which he likes to bring to my attention is the way I always leave getting ready to go somewhere to the last minute and then spend too much time deciding what to wear. (It's so girly isn't it?) It drives him spare. The poor guy has a lot to cope with, but I just don't see it. It's a place of darkness for me and that's just one of many.

The personality has been likened to an iceberg. What we know about ourselves lies at the top, above the water. What we don't know about ourselves is enough to sink the *Titanic*. And if that is true of each individual, then imagine how true it is of communities and society at large.

There are many things that go on behind closed doors in our society. Hidden from sight. I won't list them, but you will be able to name some of them. Behind closed doors abuse can occur, power deals are made and corruption has a free hand. Darkness, a metaphor for lack of sight, conceals a myriad of things both good and bad. It is a fact that God calls us into the light, into a place where the things now hidden can be brought into the open and where they can be transformed. This is what happens when we bring our deepest needs, desires, questions and doubts to God. Prayer, how our relationship with the Divine is worked out in our lives, is the way we bring our being into God's light. Our scripture readings have something to say about all of this. How God's light and truth transforms our being and brings us into wholeness.

The reading from Samuel tells the story of the choosing of young David as the next King of Israel. Samuel fully expects that God will direct him to choose one of David's older brothers but God directs Samuel to choose the youngest boy. He's ruddy (I think that means he is fresh and healthy) he's handsome and has beautiful eyes. Sounds pretty good, doesn't he? But he is not the one Samuel would have picked. God says to Samuel in verse 7: "*The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*" And that's the rub—the Lord sees everywhere. Into rugby rucks, behind closed doors, what goes on in relationships, into our very hearts—you've heard it before but God *is* everywhere, God *sees* everything. The darkness conceals nothing from God.

That is both good and a bit scary—God sees it all. It’s wonderful that God understands and knows me so well but is daunting to think God is very aware of things I would much rather were hidden. But the psalm we read today tells us something very important. Verse 4 says: *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.*

Whatever darkness we are experiencing—whether that is in ourselves, somewhere around us, we are told God is with us in a completely loving way. We have nothing to fear from the understanding that God sees everything for God is like a shepherd. The good shepherd who loves us dearly whatever we have done or haven’t done. Who protects us and comforts us.

With that knowledge we can be reassured that it is OK to bring the things hidden in darkness into the light. In our prayers we can bring our wounds, our doubts, our hidden motivations, desires and dreams to God. We can be who we are in the presence of God because God is gentle, loving and merciful. God will love us even we won’t and no one else will either.

The blind man in the gospel story had an extraordinary experience of this. There is this man, born blind from birth, who is able to see again. But this story is very complex. In many ways it is not about the physical blindness of the man but about the blindness of the Pharisees who simply cannot see or don’t want to hear the truth of the blind man’s story—that Jesus brought him sight. Jesus states in this story that: *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Jesus is the light that reveals things as they really are. Jesus shines a light on our darkness, the things we don’t know we do. He exposes our culpability, our pride, our selfishness and our violence. But perhaps more importantly Jesus also shines a light on who God is. That is the great gift of Jesus.

That he reveals God to us and corrects all our misconceptions and projections. The message we get from Jesus over and over again is that God is being of light and love. John, who wrote today’s gospel, says in one of his letters. *This is the message we have heard from Christ. That God is light in whom there is no darkness at all.*

And we so don’t get that. We complicate it over and over again. Like the Pharisees in the story, we want to argue the point. Like the Pharisees, we want to challenge God and drag in complicated questions. We get ourselves bogged down in fruitless intellectualizing and thinking, trying to find loopholes and justification for our behaviour. We complicate it to the *n*th degree when it is really very simple:

**God is light.**

**We are blind.**

**The light Jesus brings enables us to see who God is and who we are.**

Paul affirms who we are in the letter to the Ephesians. He urges his readers to grasp hold of the identity they now have Jesus Christ and *“Live as children of light”*.

As people who tell the story of Jesus and his love and sacrifice, as people who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, we live in the light of Christ. It is not just reflected glory. Through our relationship with Christ, through prayer, community life and the sacraments we are intimately connected to this light. Paul tells his readers that if that is the reality than live like it really is. Don’t mess about. Don’t complicate things. Don’t be scared. Live it like it is. Live as children of light.

Maybe that means we delve deep and bring what hides in the shadows of our being into the light and let Gods love transform it. Maybe it means we confront places of darkness. We act courageously and prophetically and speak out against injustice and violence of any type.

Maybe it means we bring light to others—that might be in the form of hope, compassion, love, and forgiveness. Maybe it means we tell the story of how our lives are touched and changed by the light and love of God. That is one of the primary ways we can reveal the God of Jesus Christ to other people. We can be the eyes and hands of Christ in the world, revealing the love of God. Paul is saying don't muck about with this stuff—just do it. Truly act like you dwell in the light of Christ. Don't be afraid—just do it.

As we gather around the table to share in the Eucharist, we tell the story that God is light. We tell the story that love wins out over darkness every time. We join ourselves to that story and to each other. May we be given all we need for the task of shining the light of Christ in the world around us. Amen.