

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

26th January 2020

Year A - Epiphany 3

Isaiah 9:1-4, I Corinthians 1:10-18, Matthew 4: 12-23

The Perspectivity of Light

May I speak in the name of the One who loves us, who sustains us and who gives us life. Amen.

There's a story that is legend in our family. Imagine if you will a voyage of discovery and exploration... a family tour into a deep cave. Daylight is left far behind you as your eyes begin to adjust and experience the incredible light installations that illuminate the cavernous spaces... the reflections in the waters of the underground pools and then, there's that moment when the lights go out and the darkness, dark like nothing you've ever experienced before surrounds you and overwhelms you. Darkness that cannot be controlled. All consuming. Into that apparently formless void where darkness covers the face of the deep speaks a voice...

Where's me gone?

The voice of a small child.

All that you have learned, all that has been revealed to you, all that you have experienced and all that light and life has taught you is gone from sight. What you thought you knew, you know no more. You wonder who you are. Where you are. A glimpse of the eternity of darkness wondering if the light... life... your understanding of who you are... will ever return.

We are used to light 24/7 and if you've been following the stories of Advent and Epiphany, you could be forgiven for thinking that it's all about light... no dark? Choose light: for dark is death and sin and evil. In the words from our Old Testament reading 'There will be no gloom for those who are in anguish... joy is increased... burdens broken... much rejoicing!' [Is 9:1-4] Light is life! Light is better. Light is the way!

How foolish that seems when for weeks, still this week... and next week...for lifetimes... centuries we have celebrated Advent and Christmas and Epiphany... the dawning of a new day... the coming of the light... and yet again... it seems there is nothing new under the sun for what has changed? This week, when yet again we are praying for Christian unity papers have been published that separate us, from one another, over matters of inclusivity. Tomorrow, we will hear the cries of 'never again' as on Holocaust Memorial day we mark the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz and remember the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia... yet just three days ago, on the advice of UN investigators, the International Court of Justice ordered measures to prevent the genocide of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

I am convinced that it is far from foolish to 'stand together'¹ in these dark places, amidst the brokenness and grief... for so often we deceive ourselves that all shall be goodness and light... and oh, how hard we try to fix the darkness. "The lights must never go out..." to quote a line from W H Auden's poem 'September 1, 1939'². The starlight of the night sky has become obscured by the

¹ 'Stand Together' is the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 www.hmd.org.uk

² First published in 'The New Republic' issue of 18th October 1939 & subsequently in Auden's book 'Another Time' (1940)

artificial light pollution of humanity's own making. The 24/7 lights of the world, from the cities that never sleep to the screens that disrupt our sleep all interrupt the ways in which our eyes and our hearts and our minds adjust to experience and to respond to the light of Christ.

The coming of light is not about fixing the darkness.

The coming of light into the darkness... is the coming of a light that gives us a new perspective, whether it's the sun by day, or the reflective light of the moon and the light of the stars by night. It is the perspective that matters.

In the depths of the cavern... that small child, confused but not scared, had no sense of perspective.

Which is why Jesus calls, with urgency... Andrew... Peter... follow... come and see... literally follow me... live life from my perspective.

If we, like the Corinthians are debating, taking sides, working out to whom we think we belong... we are in danger of losing our Christ-like perspective, Paul warns.

To support one another in this we, the Church gather for prayer and fellowship and to encounter Christ in the Eucharist together. You may know that in two weeks' time, as an integral part of our 10am service there will also be the opportunity to receive personal prayer and anointing for healing and wholeness: just one way of bringing the light of Christ's perspective to those who are living through difficult times.

Thus together we build a rule of life... a shape and structure to our lives that helps us to notice and to change the ways in which we live and respond to one another and the world around us: prayerfully choosing to respond to the changes and chances of life by the light of Christ and not by our own strength or choosing: whether we are living through dark nights of the soul or experiencing the everlasting light of the New Jerusalem.

Where's me gone?

I leave with you an abridged version of Robin Fulton Macpherson's poem, 'In the Dark'³.

God said: Let the dark be dark.
Let the stars shine properly.

Some things are best seen, unseen,
In darkness unhindered by
Great Light. Me, for example.

Revd Sarah Geileskey
Cathedral Curate
849 words

³ 'In the Dark' by Robin Fulton published in *Chapman 108* ed. Joy Hendry (Chapman, Edinburgh, 2006)