

Reflection on Lent 4

Ephesians 5: 8-14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Well friends, a lot has changed, and quickly. We have gone from a few cases in North Carolina to knowing of people who are being tested for the coronavirus. Amid the daily updates and watching the numbers climb, the worry clings to us and it is difficult to shake it off. When I went to the grocery store the other day, I felt the darkness as I found myself unconsciously holding my breath whenever I passed someone. It hurt my soul to treat a neighbor this way, but it was true. It is a worry-filled time. It is a dark time.

So I think it is appropriate that all the lectionary texts for today are about the contrast between light and darkness. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world!" when he heals the blind man (John 9). And St. Paul explains how although the presence of darkness is real and present in our lives, we are people who can take comfort in knowing we are "in" the Lord. Notice St. Paul does not say we are with Christ. He does not dare place such pressure on us. We are with one another "in" Christ, which means we are collectively surrounded by God's presence in the good times and in the bad. In joy and in sorrow. In sickness and in health.

He also mentions that the light makes invisible things visible. And it strikes me that as we face the invisible virus, the light that flows through our collective bodies and souls makes love visible and even makes God visible.

I went for a walk around our neighborhood yesterday and I was feeling anxious, but then I saw a little girl dancing underneath a cherry blossom as the breeze blew petals that twirled all around her. For a moment my worry dissipated, and I could feel the light and the joy of God's presence rise within me.

I also witnessed a child bringing something she baked over to another neighbor. She skipped back home so proud of her act of kindness. For a moment the invisible "what ifs" left me and the visibility of "what is possible" surrounded me.

Another neighbor reported that they saw a bunch of neighbors sitting in lawn chairs at the ends of their driveways drinking wine. Sharing happy hour while practicing physically

distancing, but still being socially connected. The isolating darkness flees as I felt the light of neighborly love.

It is inside of these moments when St. Pauls' words became true: "Live as children of light for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true." It's stories like these that keep me going and remind me that we are with one another *in* Christ through the good times and the bad. In joy and in sorrow. In sickness and in health. Amen.