

## LOCKDOWN DAY 29 REFLECTION – 24 APRIL 2020

My dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture reading: Philippians 4:4-7. Hymn: God is working his purpose out.

Yes, behind the scenes, God is working God's purpose out. We continue to thank God for our President and we respect his leadership and guidance. As we move to level 4 from level 5 of lockdown, our churches remain closed for services, except funerals. I will write an 'ad laos' as details unfold. We now have 3 953 confirmed cases of Covid 19 in South Africa, 1 473 patients have recovered and sadly 75 have passed away. The Western Cape is now the epicenter of the coronavirus.

A time of crisis is a time of opportunity for change, for newness and for fresh beginnings. When all is well, there is little reason to want to change. Paul is reminding us to stand together in a time such as this. We are partners in the gospel. Paul's prayer for the Christians in Phillippi is a model for our prayers for ourselves and for the church.

*He prays that love may abound.* He prays that our *knowledge and depth of insight* into the gospel message may grow. He prays that we may be *pure and blameless* and that our lives may be *filled with the fruit of righteousness*. This refers to those qualities that we call *the fruit of the Spirit* (see Gal 5:22-23 but do not regard this list as exhaustive). Paul recognizes that such a quality of life comes through *Christ Jesus*. Christ may come between this breath and the next. When our lives are characterised by growing love, insight and righteousness, it brings *glory and praise* to God. Each of us is a "work in progress" as God's Spirit works **on** us and **in** us to make us more like Jesus.

Paul wants us *to rejoice*, not in ourselves or our achievements but *in the Lord*, and not just sometimes but *always*, however difficult our circumstances. We become *joyful* because we live in the presence of God. This joy is like the sea water that is perfectly still in the deep places even though there may be great and dangerous waves on the surface. St Polycarp (about AD 155) said: "I thank you, Father, that you have found me worthy of this hour."

Paul urges a *gentleness* that everyone can see (Phil 4:5) reflecting the *humility* of Jesus. The Lord is *near*. When Paul urges the Philippians and us not to be *anxious about anything* (Phil 4:6) he is not saying that *anxiety* is sinful. We may be *anxious* about level 4 of the lockdown. These circumstances do cause *anxiety*. We are exhorted to have a **prayerful lifestyle** with the assurance that the *peace of God...will guard our hearts*, the centre of our emotional life; and our *minds* against becoming *anxious*. The word *anxiety* translates into '*care*', giving *loving attention*. We are not like the Stoics of Paul's time, who said. 'We are not affected by circumstances. We have no need of help.' We depend on God and pray for God's help. But we leave it in God's hands to work God's purpose out.

In your Quiet time today ask God to reveal to you who God wants you to reach out to, to show *care* and *loving attention*. Then call or message the first person who God places in your heart and mind.

**Let us pray** Canticles 14 and 19 (Page 353 ff) in An Anglican Prayer Book. Sadly, breaking News in Cabo Delgado is that 52 villagers have been beheaded. Pray that the perpetrators may be brought to book. Mozambique is part of us, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Pray for all who are heartbroken in our Diocese and beyond. Pray for strength upon all peace-loving people.

I am, Because we are, Because God is.....Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Thank you for allowing me into your space this week. God willing, I will check in again on Monday. God bless you.*