

The Gate of the Year

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John 1:1-19, Ephesians 1:1-14

The poem The Gate of the Year

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year

*'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the
unknown.'*

And he replied, 'Go into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way!'

God is with us in our calendars, God knows all our days, what is ahead, so we can go into the unknown holding our hands in God's without fear.

Our texts for today are about light.

We are entering the season of Epiphany.

Epiphany means revealing or showing.

In our passage from John's gospel we read that Jesus is the light of the world, the true light that enlightens every person.

What we often would like is light shone on the path ahead.

We want to know what the future holds, and how to avoid the problems.

Jesus as the light, shines little light on that subject.

But he does shine his light brightly on us.

A dear woman in my church in Thornbury was very particular about her house cleaning.

Cleanliness was next to godliness for her.

She was very excited to tell me about the laser surgery she had on both her eyes.

She could see much better after both her eyes were done.

The only problem she encountered was now she could see the dirt, in what she had thought was her clean house, much better and she had spent considerable time with the vacuum house cleaning.

That's the kind of light Jesus shines on us.

No wonder some people prefer the darkness.

Seeing ourselves in the light of Jesus calls us to repent, to turn, to clean house, to change.

It's not at all that Jesus doesn't love us as we are- it is rather that he loves us so much that he wants us to see the truth about our brokenness and sin.

When we cling to the values of a broken world we destroy our world, ourselves, and others.

Jesus comes to reveal the truth, to set us free, so that we might live out abundant life.

John says; "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only son, full of grace and truth."

Glory is substantial, it is heavy, it is the brilliance of light, the weight of God's hand laid solidly on your heart.

It is a force that makes rulers cower on their knees.

It leaves you breathless, or maybe taking your first real deep breath.

We have beheld his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

In that light, in being held in that embrace, we are fully known, and we begin to know ourselves more fully.

And part of what is called in our response is often house cleaning.

Some of you own Serendipity Study Bibles.

Sometimes their questions are most helpful.

For the passage from Ephesians, it says to list God's actions.

I did that.

God blessed us, chose us, he destined us for love and adopted us, he has freely given to us.

We have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins, wisdom and understanding to discern God's purpose to draw all things together in Christ.

We have obtained an inheritance, and been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Another light comes on.

God has chosen us, forgiven and given to us, and Paul says he is living for the praise of God's glory.

The next question I found helpful was "what do you want to change to live for the praise of God's glory?"

At the beginning of a new year as we remember Jesus' gifts for us.

How will we live this year, this day, in response to those gifts?

What do you want to change?

Maybe it's time to clean house, to pull some weeds, to make room for what is most important. Sometimes the good is the enemy of the best.

WE don't make the changes in our own strength, but if there is some area that God is shining a light on, that needs to be changed, God will help you and give you the courage, the ability to do what's needed, if you ask for the help.

I want to invite you to let God speak to you, to let God's glory fall on this place and illuminate our hearts.

For a few moments, about 3 minutes, let us be quiet before God, allowing God to shine his light on us so our hearts and lives will be revealed to us.

I invite you to have your hands up, open, as a sign of our openness to receiving God's word.

(Time for silent reflection/prayer)

Gracious God the light of your love reveals the truth to us. We see ourselves more fully, we see the truth about our brokenness and sin. O Lord, you have searched us and known us, you know when we rise up and when we sit. You are acquainted with all our ways. Continue to remake us in your image. Cleanse our hearts and do not take your Holy Spirit from us. We place our hands in yours trusting in your mercy and grace that can heal, and set us free to live abundant lives in Jesus' name. Amen.