

# *Let us be transformed by God's power*

*Philippians 3.17-21*

On Monday, Pennie and I ventured into our church to record the prayers for this week. As we walked carefully in, touching as little as possible and keeping at a distance from each other, we realised we were not alone in the church.

As we opened the inner door to the sanctuary, to the main worship area of the church, we realised that we were walking through small cobwebs across the doors. Now I know, that some of you are freaking out now, some of us like spiders, some of us don't mind spiders and a fair few hate them. But what we found once inside was an incredible sight, the entire of the top of the front pew had an enormous cobweb stretching from one end to the other.

Since lockdown the church has been closed and will not reopen fully for a while yet.

As the church building has ceased to be used for its original purpose, the spiders have taken over. See our building is normally cleaned every week, has lots of people in it – singing, listening, worshipping, praying. Those pews have kids clambering over them and offering adults a place to sit and rest.

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he writes to the Christians. He writes to those who are attending the church and know well the name of Jesus and all his teaching, these people know that God loves them, that he died for them and that Christians need to follow in Christ's way. And yet Paul is weeping. V18 I have told you many times, and now I repeat it with tears: there are those whose lives make them enemies of the cross.

At the heart of the church in Philippi there were some people who called themselves Christians, but their lives were not cross shaped. What does it mean to be cross shaped? To have a cruciform life. In short to

be like Christ Jesus who took on the nature of a servant, was humble and walked the path of obedience, all the way to death on a cross.

Pennie and I marvelled at that mega cobweb, but she also suggested to me that it serves as a prophetic image for us too. We've always known there have been spiders in our church, we know that from the way they can set off the alarm by crawling over it. But lockdown has revealed their true presence and power.

I wonder what else has lockdown revealed to us? As we commute less, as we shop less, as we visit less, what have we seen? What have we seen that we have known has always been there but now is unavoidably present? As we witnessed the death of George Floyd and now Rayshard Brooks in the USA, our gaze cannot be so easily diverted from the racism that exists in our world.

As I continue to reflect on racism, colonialism and white privilege I ask the same question now of myself – where have I ignored racism within my life, my ministry and in our church and world? What about each of us? What have we ignored in our lives, that now through just a little more time we can no longer avoid?

Maybe our relationships need work, maybe our eating habits need sorting out, maybe our spiritual life needs tending. What might God be challenging us today about? What might his Spirit be prompting in our souls now? Listen carefully to the nudge of God, listen attentively to his prompting today and hold on to it and allow God to speak to you.

One day, and I don't know when, we will be worshipping together again at Christ Church. The building will be transformed, there will be no more cobwebs and it will be full of delighted people instead singing to the glory of God. While we await eagerly for that day to come, may we know that Christ Jesus is in the business of transformation. He takes the lowly and lifts them up, he turns water into wine, and God haters into saints. God formed each of our bodies now, God made

each of us, and will make us again into glorious bodies fit for heaven.

His work of transformation is not restricted to heaven. For our God's power can change anything and any person, his power can melt the coldest of hearts and rebuild the broken. God's power is immense because it is based in his love, the greatest of all loves – the love he has for us his children. Hear the challenge of scripture today:

May we be open to change  
May we be ready to follow Christ afresh  
May we have lives that look like his.

The power of God is this, he can blow away every cobweb in our lives, in our church and in our world. the love of God is this: he wants to transform us. The grace of God is this: he will always be waiting for us to say yes to his transforming power in our lives.

Jesus Christ is the saviour of the world, he calls each of us and especially those in the church to follow him in lives that are dedicated to love, mercy and justice.

May the Spirit enable us to bravely face the cobwebs of our lives and our shared life so that we may shine for God's glory as we delight in our citizenship of heaven.