

Reflection – September 20, 2020

Masks are a thing now. In order to have fresh and clean masks available every day, we are getting quite a collection at our house. For the most part, we prefer the cloth masks. Cloth masks are becoming a part of the fabric of our world.

Wearing masks for daily life is something that is new and recent in our lives, but that it not true for everyone.

Our friend Hanna Yokozawa Farquharson is a Saskatchewan fabric artist whose birth heritage is from Japan where, when she lived there, she knew masks as a part of daily life.

Hanna wrote a piece about masks:

She called it: The COVID 19 Mask: Symbol and Gift In her writing, she reflects on the mask as a symbol of the pandemic. And, as we did not want the pandemic, we did not want the mask. But the pandemic was everywhere. She writes:

No one was invulnerable.

With the passage of time and a concerted educational effort, people began to understand that the masks protected them and helped them protect others. They become a symbol of accepting responsibility for the well-being of family and community, and a symbol of caring.

She continues: The mask speaks of knowing self, appreciating myself as person of worth and possibility, and being myself as part of family, of nature, of that which holds all things in unity and love.

As we know this, in ourselves and in our communities, the world will change – and become increasingly a place of creativity and joy, justice, serenity and peacefulness.

That which we first experienced as symbol of fear, death and loss becomes symbol of friendship, hope and caring.

I want to hold this thought about masks as we think about the Gospel reading. Matthew recounts Jesus telling the story of the landowner who offers work to day labourers. More and more labourers as added as the day goes on, and at the end of the day, when all are to be paid their wages, they all receive the day's pay.

Those who have worked the full day grumble against the landowner for what feels to them as an injustice. But really, no one was cheated – and we need to shake away our inclinations to interpret the story as if our economics of value are God's.

The landowner though...how are we to understand the landowner – often it is with a label of generosity. The Rev. Dr. Greg Deloach made an interesting observation as he translated the Greek words. He translates the end with "...is your eye evil because I am good?" It is not that the landowner is generous – it is that the landowner is good.

And, if the landowner symbolizes God, then God is the one who is good. God is the one who values the lost. God is the one who values the last ones in. And, that eye that is evil – that is all about envy and a misplaced sense of value and love.

As Annette, Cheryl and Crystal sang in our hymn:
But with God the world is turned upside down
The poor are embraced and the lost they are found
Let's work for a world where all people are free
Where it's good to feel good about God loving you and me.

So how is it that we can hear this parable as an invitation to see the world differently?

And, how can this tie to our own attitudes towards mask wearing.

If we understand God as good, then we are called to live goodness for one another.

Wearing a mask is not about protecting ourselves. It is about living goodness to protect others.

We can grumble that we do not like masks, they are hot, uncomfortable, or they make it difficult to hear one another. We might even grumble asking, why we have to wear a mask when we are not sick, we have not been anywhere, and we cannot possibly have COVID. All these things might be true, but to wear a mask is to make a statement that everyone else matters too.

To wear a mask is to live care for one another. To wear a mask is to treat all the people around you -- even those you see for a brief time, as if they are beloved children of God and their health and life matters.

So let's turn the world upside down. Let's wear our masks and make a difference.

God is good, all the time.
All the time, God is good.

Amen.