

How the Light Gets In --- And Out

**How the Light Gets In --- And Out
Reflections on 2 Corinthians 4.1-12**

**The Installation as Vicar of the Parish of the Reverend Timothy Morgan
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**Christ Church
Hope BC**

Do not be deceived by outward appearances.

I grew up in Colorado Springs where the Great Plains meet the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains at the foot of Pikes Peak. Millions of years ago my home town lay on the bed of a shallow but vast inland sea. In the sediment cavities of various sizes formed as organic material or minerals decayed or dissolved in the surrounding waters. Over millions of years water saturated with various minerals seeped back into these cavities creating layers around the shell. When the sea retreated, these bubbles solidified and became geodes, unattractive objects, some round, others oblong, some small, some large, that are found in the hills where my friends and I wandered.

It is only when you break open a geode or cut it open with a rock-cutting saw that its hidden treasure is revealed. All the colours of the rainbow dazzle your eyes. A veritable forest of crystals grows out the interior of the shell towards the centre. I have a pair of bookends at home that my father had made for me out of a geode he had found. They followed me to university and have been with me for almost fifty years. Whenever I look at them, I am reminded that one should always avoid being deceived by outward appearances. What looks like a stone potato may actually be concealing a glorious display of God's handiwork.

Being broken doesn't mean something or someone is not beautiful.

When Tim sent me the readings for tonight's celebration of this new chapter in the life of Christ Church, I was overjoyed to see the reading from the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians. For me it is Paul writing at his most open and honest best. I hope you will forgive me for reading just a few more verses from this chapter where Paul cracks open the gospel geode to reveal the glory of God being made manifest in the lives of Christ's disciples.

⁷But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, but life in you.

I think that the last twenty-five years have shown all of us the fragility of the vessel we call 'the church' as it carries the 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. All of the cracks and chips caused by our struggles to be faithful to our apostolic ministry of proclaiming the good news of God in Christ revealed and constantly being revealed by the Holy Spirit can be seen in the fabric of every parish of our diocese. I dare say many of us here tonight have a few cracks and chips that weren't there twenty-five years ago.

We know the costs of being faithful to the apostolic tradition rather than human traditionalism. We may be tempted to try and hide from ourselves and from others these cracks and chips. But they are sacraments, outward and visible signs of God's inward and spiritual grace working in us and through us. They are the marks of an honourable and faithful 'Via Dolorosa', the way of the Cross that leads us not to everlasting defeat but to eternal life, not just in some distant future, but in the here and now.

There is a Japanese art form called *kintsugi*. It is the art of repairing broken ceramics with various metals, often gold and silver. When the artist is finished with the repairs, the cracks and chips are not invisible. On the contrary, our eyes are immediately drawn to them. They are no longer signs of decay or misuse or damage; they frame the story of this vessel, so precious that it cannot be thrown away. Something new emerges from the fragments of the old, perhaps not with the same beauty as graced the original, but with the beauty of its courage to tell its story without fear or concealment. The potter, the jeweller and the vessel look us straight in the eye and say, 'Here is a treasure. Even its imperfections now shine with the light of truth. Being broken doesn't mean something or someone isn't beautiful.'

There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.^[1]

My friends, especially Tim and the people of Christ Church, you have a precious treasure, the good news of God in Christ. Just as a diamond has many facets, so are there many faces to this good news among you. Here in Hope I am confident that, working together, you will dare to name how you have experienced that good news and to discern what good news your friends and neighbours here in Hope need to see in you and hear from you.

But even the most precious of diamonds has its flaws, records of the story of how this diamond came to be under the pressure of millions of years. Do not be afraid to let people see the cracks and chips that tell your story. They record how this Christian community has not only lived through difficult times, but how you have mended those cracks and chips with the precious metal that is Christ in us, earthen vessels even though we are.

In 1992 Leonard Cohen released an album entitled *The Future*. Among its songs was 'Anthem'. When he was interviewed about the album and about this song in particular, Cohen said,

. . . there is a crack in everything that you can put together: Physical objects, mental objects, constructions of any kind. But that's where the light gets in, and that's where the resurrection is and that's where the return, that's where the repentance is. It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of things. ^[2]

And so, my friends, "Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack, a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in." ^[3] And, I dare to add, it's also how the light gets **out** and transforms our shadows into the glorious day of the Lord.

^[1]'Anthem' by Leonard Cohen, 1992.

^[2]<https://qz.com/835076/leonard-cohens-anthem-the-story-of-the-line-there-is-a-crack-in-everything-that-s-how-the-light-gets-in/> accessed on 8 September 2019.

^[3]'Anthem' by Leonard Cohen, 1992.