

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Bible readings

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41, Psalm 23

A Collect

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Text

Ephesians 5:8ff

Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true ... Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them ... Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.

A story

Adapted from "Welcoming Each Wonder" © Tom Gordon – www.ionabooks.com

To see what you see

Timothy had to admit it as he looked out of his front-room window – he was bored ... Not mind-numbingly, this-is-the-worst-day-of-my-life, nobody-could-ever-have-been-as-bored-as-this-in-the-whole-history-of-the-universe kind of bored. Just bored, the kind of bored that comes along when you've tried everything else – like your computer games and puzzle books and a host of other things – and you're not sure what to put

your mind to next. This kind of bored would pass – Timothy knew that – but for now, in that gap between doing stuff that was interesting and doing some more stuff that *would* be interesting, boredom was the name of the game.

Having gramps around helped, of course, or, at least, it had helped up till now. On a mid-term long-weekend break from school, and with Timothy's parents both committed to work on the Monday, gramps was the child-care provision. Timothy didn't much like the idea of child-care – after all, he wasn't a child (Well, you're not when you're nine-and-three-quarters, are you?) and he didn't reckon he needed *that* much caring for. But "rules are rules", his mum said, so gramps was the child-care for the day. But if Timothy didn't much like the idea of child-care, he very *much* liked the times he had with gramps.

Gramps and Timothy were best mates, and there were lots of things Timothy had learned from his gramps that he would have had *no* chance of learning from anyone else. Timothy had perfected the "broken-match-in-the-handkerchief trick" (too complicated *and* secret to explain ...) and he'd got that from his gramps. Timothy knew all the books of the bible (all sixty-six of them ...) and could even recite them backwards – and he'd got that from his gramps. Timothy could write with both hands (*and* do mirror-writing with his left ...) and he'd got that from his gramps. Timothy knew a song about "Dangerous Dan McGrew" (though nobody was *ever* to know that he knew *that* kind of song ...) and he'd got that from his gramps. *That's* why Timothy and gramps were best mates ...

Timothy's boredom was interrupted with an awareness that gramps had appeared at his side.

'You look bored,' said gramps.

'Yeah, kind of,' said Timothy, continuing to stare out of the window. It had been raining hard all day. Any chance of gramps taking him to the park had disappeared ages ago. A very wet day and periods of boredom always went together.

Gramps went silent, joining Timothy in his bored quietness. Then after a while he said, 'What do you see out of the window?'

'Same as you, gramps,' replied Timothy, somewhat puzzled by the question.

'Well, what's that?' gramps continued. Timothy decided to go along with the questioning. He knew gramps was onto something. He didn't know what, not yet anyway. But gramps always had an angle ...

'Well,' Timothy began, stating the obvious, 'for starters there are the trees at the bottom of the garden.'

'Good,' responded gramps. 'But what do you *see*?'

'I see the trees moving about in the wind, just like they've been doing all morning.'

'Good. Moving trees ... Good,' gramps went on. 'But what do you *really* see?' Timothy was puzzled (not an unusual feeling when gramps was onto something). But he decided to have a try.

'Well, I see trees moving in the wind ... the branches going one way and then the other ... altogether ... like ... as if they were ... waving their arms ...'

There was a smile in gramps' voice now. 'Good! Good! So you see trees, with branches moving altogether, like people, waving their arms, first one way then the other. Good. So what do you see now?' Timothy realized he was smiling too.

'Well, gramps, they'd kind of like ... dancers.'

'Excellent!' said gramps. 'And if they're *dancers*, there must be ...'

'Music!' Timothy exclaimed, 'music that only the trees can hear.'

'Well done!' But Timothy was deaf to the praise. He was on a roll!

'Yes, gramps,' he continued excitedly, 'music, tree-music, special music for trees. See, the branches are nearly still, just moving a bit ... look ... hardly shaking. That's the quiet music, *really* quiet. That's why they've stopped moving.' Then, a sudden gust of wind shook the trees violently from their reverie, and the branches swung wildly again. 'There, gramps!' shouted Timothy. 'Look at that. The music's gone *very* loud now! Oh wow! There must be cymbals crashing and loud drums banging. Amazing! Some of the branches are finding it awfully hard to keep up. They must be exhausted!'

'So, what do you see, young man?' enquired gramps, in an appropriate pause in Timothy's effervescent explanation of the drama taking place at the bottom of his garden. Timothy turned to his gramps and beamed widely.

'I see trees, gramps ... I see dancing trees ... I see dancing trees waving their arms together ... I see musical, dancing trees, swaying back and forwards, side to side, to music only they can hear. It's amazing music, eh gramps? D'you think if we listened *really* hard we might be able to hear the music too, eh gramps?'

'Yup, I reckon we might be able to do just that ...'

Gramps returned to his chair by the fire. Timothy continued to watch the dancing trees. He wasn't bored any more, and he was moving his head from side to side in rhythm with the dancers ...

And then Timothy started to hum a little tune. As he did, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that gramps was tapping his hand on the arm of his chair in time to the music ...

A reflection

To look and see,
and enjoy the seeing,
and marvel at the beauty ...

To look and see,
and enjoy the imagining,
and marvel at the mystery ...

To look and see,
and enjoy more than the seeing,
and marvel at unfolding pictures ...

To look and see,
enjoy the imagining,
and wonder why that couldn't be seen before ...

To look and see,
and enjoy the seeing,
and marvel at the unfathomable beauty ...

To look and see,
and find new wonder in all the things
exposed by your Light ...

To look and see ...

It is the very gift of God.