

Sunday February 2, 2025  
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

**Meditation:** “Mirror, mirror”

This week I’ve been thinking about mirrors. Probably it was Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth that started that line of thinking. In Paul’s day manufacturing techniques were not up to 21<sup>st</sup> century standards. In Paul’s day a mirror was nothing more than a piece of metal, perhaps copper, that had been hammered until it was as flat and smooth as it could be made, and then polished to a shine. Looking at such a piece of metal would allow you do see a reflection of yourself, but it would be somewhat distorted because of the little hammer dents, the colour wouldn’t be quite right, and if there was any tarnish starting, the image would be dull and flat. No wonder he said “we see in a mirror, dimly.”

The mirrors I use most are the mirrors in the car. You know, the ones that say, “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear.” Those mirrors are not used to look at myself, but to look at what is, if I have them adjusted correctly, beside me. If I get into the car after Barbara has driven it, by the time I get the seat adjusted, all I can see in the side mirrors is the side of the car, and I’m not to likely to have a collision with myself, so I readjust them to see what is beside me. The rearview mirror, the one in the centre, is to see what is behind us. And, of course, you all know why the rearview mirror is so small, especially in relation to the windshield, right? Because we should be focusing most of our time and attention looking forward and not backward.

Can you think of other mirrors we use? (Hubble and Webb space telescopes, compacts, shaving, make-up, fun house, etc.)

Boy, those fun house mirrors are a lot of laughs. You wind up looking short and stout or tall and skinny, or maybe even rippled.

So here are a couple of thoughts about mirrors. First, the thing about those fun house mirrors, or the side-view mirrors in my car, or Paul’s mirrors is that

they all give a somewhat distorted view of reality. And, all mirrors can only reflect the present reality. I can't look into a mirror and see myself as I was at 25. (okay, so the mirrors on the space telescopes show us what happened thousands or even millions of years ago.... but the ones on earth don't do that) Neither can I look into a mirror and see myself as I will be at 95. All I can see is how I look today.

Mirrors cannot show you the future, nor the path that lies ahead. The only way we have of seeing into the future is not with the use of a mirror, but with the use of our imaginations. We can only imagine what the future may be like, or what we would like the future to be like. In order to imagine the best possible future, we also need to use something other than our imagination; we need to use love. There are all kinds of dystopian movies that predict nightmarish futures for us, even worse than 25% tariffs being inflicted on us by the current president of the United States. To imaging a future that is well, heavenly or paradisaical requires us to use love, not anger or fear or hatred or greed or self-ambition or vanity or anything else. This is not as easy as it sounds.

To use love in imagining the future requires us to set aside our own selfish agendas; requires us to set aside any consideration of what it may cost us. To imagine a future worth living in requires us to think about what would be best for everyone, not just everyone we love, or everyone who lives in Canada, but for everyone everywhere, everyone we don't know, everyone we don't like, everyone we despise, everyone we hate, and everyone who despises or hates us. To imagine a future worth living in requires us to think beyond our own tiny place in the world and to consider how our future will affect the future of others in our community, our country, and around the world. To imagine a future worth living in requires us to think beyond our own finite lives; to think about how our present actions impact the future for our great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren. For our future to be bright, the future of everyone around us and everyone who follows us has to be bright.

In a way, our annual report is a mirror. It shows us the recent past, just like a rearview mirror in a car does. Given the amount of time spent calculating our finances, and everything else reported, it is as close to a snapshot of current reality as we are likely to get. It describes our current ministry in the community and around the world over the course of the last year. What it cannot do is to show us the future or the various paths that lie ahead. The only thing we can be sure of is that the future will not be like our present reality; won't be like today, because the one constant in life is change.

In a few weeks we will gather for our Annual Congregational Meeting. We will look into the recent past, and we will try to peer into the future as well. As you try to envision your future, stop and ask yourself if your vision for this congregation is a loving one, or does it only take into consideration your own wishes and desires? Does your vision embrace all, or does it stop short where it might cost you something? Is your vision life-giving for all, or will it demean life for some in order to build up others? If your vision doesn't embrace all, isn't life-giving for all, go back to the imagining stage until you have it right. You will know when you have it right, because you will be able to negotiate your way through all of the naysayers and problems just the way that Jesus negotiated his way through the crowd who wanted to stone him in Nazareth. Dare to imagine big unimaginable futures for the body of Christ remembering that God is with you, both in the imagining and in the process of making your images a reality, for God's imagining is even bigger still.