

Transforming Lives



A plastic bucket on our veranda may seem a strange illustration for a reflection on life, but what attracted me to it was how the bucket was changed by the sunlight. The surrounds of the bucket were mundane and dark, but the light transformed an ordinary bucket into something extraordinary. It stopped me for a few minutes. I am used to pausing to gaze at a beautiful sunset or listen to the song of a bird, but this was different. A bucket is something we usually appreciate because of its usefulness, rather than its beauty.

Each day we wake up to something new. Our surroundings, physical and mental, may look the same, but time has passed and we are in a fresh place which has the potential to confront us with the unexpected or unimagined. Sometimes we do not want to be challenged with facing the unknown, and at other times we may be fed up with the dull and ordinary, and wonder what is the point of our life. Whatever we might feel, the certainty that we can hold on to is that each second of each day and night, God is with us regardless of what we are facing or doing. This fact can be affirmed by small glimpses of God's love that may unexpectedly appear. These glimpses are not only connected to objects we see, but also found in interruptions to our daily routine that become catalysts able to transform our lives.

In the fascinating story in John's Gospel chapter 4, a Samaritan woman came with her water jug to collect water from a well. This would have been a regular daily task for her. This day Jesus was resting near the well and, surprisingly for a Jewish man, not only spoke to her but asked her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water from the well. She could have ignored him or quickly given him a drink, before re-filling her jar and returning home. Instead, she responded to Jesus by engaging in a lengthy conversation with him concerning his identity and his gift of "living water."

The visit by the woman to the well was no longer just a job to collect her drinking water for the day, but began to change her life. In the end she even left her precious water jug behind and hurried back to the city to tell others about this man at the well who could be, and probably was, the longed for Messiah. The lives of the woman and the others she spoke to in the city were eventually transformed by Jesus who, at their invitation, stayed for two days.

We may not have such a dramatic change arising from an interruption to our daily work, but perhaps one that will still transform us and our lives in a small way.

It may be that after we have had our breakfast, we start to do our housework. Will we do it as usual, or begin in a different place to make it more interesting? We start by cleaning the kitchen. Presently someone comes in and comments on how the neat kitchen makes them feel peaceful. The housework which can be so boring may also give those we live with, and ourselves, pleasure.

Another time we may just have begun work on our computer, when the phone rings. We are asked to drive a neighbour to town for some urgent shopping. When we return to our work, we cannot find a piece of paper we had with some vital information we need. We become anxious and start to blame the interruption. If at this point we can relax, stop, and start to think more clearly, our difficulty may shrink and we no longer want to blame anyone or anything. Then strangely, God seems present, and sometimes, what was missing reappears!

Recently I conducted my regular monthly Service at an aged care facility. This ministry takes some effort as I try to prepare a Service that will be helpful for the residents. I take my guitar and we sing a few hymns as well as reading and

considering a Bible passage and praying. Then I distribute Holy Communion to those who would like it. Last month, things did not go as usual. The facility was short-staffed because of Covid-19 and only four residents and a staff member came to the Service. I wondered if perhaps I should cancel it, but quickly refused to go along that path.

Soon we began, and somehow a peace seemed to descend. One person slept, another who rarely spoke, joined in singing the first hymn along with a fellow resident, the member of staff and myself. Regardless of one woman calling out at odd times, and a cleaner pushing a noisy machine through the room near the end, God's presence and peace seemed very real. When I left, I felt that peace in myself and was so grateful for this experience shared with the others who were present.

Everyday life, with its repetitive actions of cooking, eating, drinking, shopping, meeting others, cleaning, working, gardening, sleeping and interruptions, has all the ingredients to transform our lives if we are open to notice God's glory and love in the unexpected. We may see God in a sunlit bucket, a stranger, a friend's gratitude, or in a sense of peace. At these times we can be thankful for what we receive, and ask God to use our lives in transforming the lives of others.

*Sister Helen CSC
September 2022*