

# DAILY REFLECTION: 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 – “Homeless”

by Geoff Pearson (& Steve)



A few days ago I heard there was going to be some kind of lunar eclipse. The weather forecaster called it a strawberry moon, and it was due to happen between 3:30am and 5:30am. I happened to wake up at 4:30am that night, so I put on my dressing gown and took Steve the dog outside to see what the fuss was all about.

Well, we didn't find any strawberries. No surprise there. What I found was North East Victoria at its harshest, coldest and most spectacular. The temperature had dropped to three below zero, and the grass crunched under my feet as I walked. A brilliant full moon lit up the night sky and bathed the earth with a cold steely blue-grey light, stripping all the warmth and colour from the scenery and repainting it in cold metallic hues. A dense white mist had settled over the surrounding paddocks, blocking from view anything beyond the immediate back yard. It felt like my world had become untethered during the night and drifted off into deep space.



And it was silent. Eerily so. Nothing was stirring. Nothing.

I looked at my own hand and it was pallid and blue in the moonlight. It reminded me of the scene in the Willy Wonka movie where Violet Beauregard turned into a giant blueberry. The forecaster had picked the wrong berry, I thought to myself. It had become a blueberry moon. The scene was as humbling and unsettling as it was spectacular. There was this overwhelming feeling of being cold, adrift, and alone. VERY alone.

I chose to stand still for a few moments to experience the grandeur of the scene. Steve wasn't quite as taken by it as I was. He had decided there was greater beauty and grandeur to be found back in the lounge-room in front of the heater. It didn't take long before I chose to do the same. It only occurred to me later how fortunate I am that I can readily return to the warmth, privacy, protection, stability of my own home. That I may enjoy the luxury and comfort of shelter, and that I may know where my next meal is coming from.

Imagine not having access to the warmths and comforts of life that most of us take for granted . . . Imagine being homeless. I can't. I cannot imagine not having a fridge, with my own milk and ice cream and veggies. I cannot imagine not having a place to keep my clothes and my dog and my medications and my bike. I cannot imagine not having a warm place to retreat to when the night serves up a blueberry moon and the world is icy cold and steel grey. I cannot imagine how long and lonely the nights and days might feel to live that way. And I don't see any reason why anyone should. I had dipped my toe in the chilling waters of homelessness that night, and was reminded of the pain of isolation that some people live with every day. It is not right that a civilized nation like ours can let some of its own people fall into such despair.

Please read Jesus' story of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31-46, specially noting v.40 " *The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'*



In July and August, a consortium of local churches will be offering night shelter support for those people around Wangaratta who are sleeping rough. It has been a privilege to work with the dedicated, warm-hearted individuals who are leading this project. I expect I am not going to like everything that I am going to learn about my world by being involved in this. But sometimes you just need to bite the bullet and say I will not stand by and let this happen.

In this post-COVID world we are dealing with a lot of extra regulations and hurdles to get this off the ground. It is a credit to the Wang Night Shelter team that they are not perturbed by this and are forging onwards. We are endeavouring to help some people - real people - feel respected and cared for in a world that hasn't always delivered for them. We are providing meals and company and a little bit of stability for them. There are many ways you can help, from donations to volunteering on-site, to baking biscuits to drying the odd load of laundry. We also have kind-hearted individuals donating hand-knitted socks and beanies to the cause. **For more info please contact: Di Duursma, Project Coordinator 0419 530 455** Little things like this can make a world of difference in the life of someone sleeping rough. Next time you wake up to a frosty cold winter morning, spare a thought for those who wake up in it. It is not a choice.

**SONG:** *We Are Blessed* by Andy Flannagan - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6agHVz15OsU>