

Thursday in the Week of the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost August 20, 2020

After feeding over 5000 people, Jesus walks down to the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee near Tiberias. His closest disciples get into a boat to head back to the town of Capernaum on the northwestern shore without the Teacher. The crowds had been amazed that some much food was gathered up after their meal together on the hillside.

Read John 6:16-27. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

My father built a small sailing dingy in his basement in a small mining town north of Lake Superior after he recovered from his heart attack. He enjoyed sailing on small lakes in northern Ontario and around Simcoe County. Before he died, I retrieved this sailing dingy from a barn at my sister's farm and repaired it to sail in Lake Huron. My father reminded me that the plans came from England so the dingy was designed to sail on the North Sea. My father-in-law reminded me that the waters on Lake Huron could be treacherous. In taking my three children to the beach as often as possible, I had learned that the waters on Lake Huron needed to be respected and taught my children to appreciate the power of huge waves and the destructive grip of riptides.

The disciples find themselves in high winds and rough waters far from the shoreline. In spite of their predicament, the disciples are terrified when they see the Teacher walking out to them near their boat. In this Johannine reading, no explanation is provided for the overwhelming fear which the disciples experienced. In this reading, there is no reference to Simon Peter taking tentative steps to walk out to Jesus on the stormy seas. The Teacher reassures his disciples, **"It's me. It's all right. Don't be afraid."** **John 6:20.** In the NRSV, the Teacher greets the disciples by making a profound theological statement about himself, saying, **"I AM."** In Hebrew or Aramaic, this greeting could be translated as the Teacher saying, **"I AM WHO I AM."** The Teacher tells his disciples to trust their eyes and understand his claim to be the same Living Being as Creator or Great Spirit and able to walk on stormy waters. It is miraculous that the disciples find peace in these words without indicating any understanding about what is taking place.

A second miracle happens. When the disciples accept the Teacher into their boat, the high winds and raging waters cease. In that moment, the Teacher and his disciples arrive at their destination on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. The disciples are silent but the crowds who crossed the Sea of Galilee from Tiberias were amazed to find the Teacher with his disciples and wondered how the Teacher could make such a journey in such a short time.

Although the Teacher speaks to the crowd who had eaten their fill and discovered that twelve baskets overflowed with the leftovers from the feast, the Teachers words are directed to his disciples. The Teacher knew Creator and the Great Spirit to be very generous to each and all so Jesus took the five barley loaves and two small fish, gave thanks, broke them into pieces, and gave these to the crowd. Like water at Jacob's well outside Samaria, the loaves and fish are more than what they are in this physical world at this moment in time. These physical elements point towards more substantial spiritual nourishment. Like the woman at the well, the crowds see the Teacher with different eyes. The woman

at the well thirsted for living water. The crowds sought food from heaven and looked to the Teacher to provide them with more to chew and digest. The Teacher hoped that his disciples would catch this vision and begin to thirst for living water and to hunger for spiritual food provided by the Human One sent by Creator and the Great Spirit.

Read John 6:16-27. What is God saying to us through this passage?

A number of curious people from a variety of Anglican Churches in downtown Toronto have gathered for a number of years to explore issues facing Indigenous Peoples to form the Indigenous Solidarity Working Group at the Church of the Redeemer. While the Reverend Canon Andrew Wesley served as the first Toronto Urban Native Ministry Indigenous Priest, he participated in this group before his retirement. His wife Esther Wesley also participated in some events when she was the Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Canada Healing Fund when she retired. Both have roots in the Mushkegowuk Cree along the western shores of Hudson Bay and James Bay. The Indigenous Solidarity Working Group make arrangements to travel together to learn more about issues impacting Indigenous Peoples and invite others to join them on these quests for knowledge. In February 2019, the group attended a play at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto COTTAGERS AND INDIANS written by Drew Hayden Taylor, a member of Curve Lake First Nation north of Peterborough. With humour, Drew Hayden Taylor presented the conflict between a man who plants and harvests manoomin {Anishinaabemowin for gift from Creator} and a woman who owns a family cottage on a lake which had for thousands of years provided food security for Anishinaabe Peoples. In September 2019, the ISWG travelled to Curve Lake First Nation to learn about harvesting this traditional food wild rice. The ISWG were provided with an explanation of the importance of the role that manoomin played in the daily and ceremonial lives of Anishinaabe Peoples around the Great Lakes. Before Settlers arrived on Turtle Island, manoomin grew in many places and fed many nations. The heat of August sun causes the kernels to swell with a milk in the day and then the cool of the night causes this milk to solidify into large, flavourful grains. In September, canoes take harvesters out onto the waters where thick manoomin stalks grow and wave in the wind. One ricer bends the stalks of manoomin over the hull of the canoe while the other ricer uses two cedar sticks to tap the grains from the seed heads. Manoomin is the first food of a baby and the last food of an elder. Experienced Anishinaabe harvesters can fill a canoe with 200 kilograms of wild rice in a single day. Manoomin was then brought to land to be further winnowed and roasted to last through the winter and into the summer feasts. For many Indigenous Peoples, the return to foods which their ancestors have eaten from the land and waters has become a way of life to protest the brutality of systemic racism and to return their Peoples to much healthier foods, better health, community strengthening activities, business opportunities, and spiritual practices which acknowledge the generosity of Creator and the resilience of Indigenous Peoples. Drew Haden Taylor filmed the ISWG during this harvest while another member of Curve Lake First Nation James Whetung did the teaching. In July 2020, CBC finally presented a documentary COTTAGERS AND INDIANS using a portion of the filming done with the ISWG. Over 15 years, James Whetung reseeded Pigeon Lake with manoomin from his fanboat as well as parts of the Trent-Severn Waterway north of Peterborough. His efforts have generated a great deal of angry opposition from those who own cottages along these waterways. The CBC documentary begins with a town hall meeting in Bobcaygeon with Cottagers and Indigenous

Peoples around Pigeon Lake engaged in a heated discussion. The Cottagers react to the identification of white supremacy which propels systemic racism as well as more personal instances of racism directed towards Indigenous Peoples. James Whetung demonstrates his own anger towards a particular Cottager couple in the scenes in which he replants the manoomin directly in front of their cottage, shouting and making gestures. These Cottagers explain to Drew Hayden Taylor their willingness to work out a compromise with James Whetung. In this documentary, Drew Hayden Taylor also introduces viewers to Shoal Lake First Nation who supplied pristine water to the city of Winnipeg but remained under a long term water advisory for almost four decades, to Osoyoos Indian Band who prosper by driving the wine industry and agriculture in the southern Okanagan in British Columbia, and to Saugeen First Nation who seek to resolve a boundary dispute in Sauble Beach. The Chief and Council for Curve Lake First Nation published a Letter of Support for James Whetung in his efforts to replant and harvest manoomin on their traditional territories. When the ISWG arranged a ZOOM video conference call with Drew Hayden Taylor, questions were asked about the documentary. One of the ISWG asked if Curve Lake had opened a residential school and shamed children and youth of surrounding Cottagers in speaking their first language or forbid them from wearing their traditional clothing or forced them to eat foods which were foreign to their bodies. Drew Hayden Taylor laughed and confirmed that this was not the case, noting that the reservation lands were too small to house all of the children and youth from Cottager households. Drew Hayden Taylor also noted that the flooding of the Trent-Severn Waterway put about 20% of their reservation lands under water during the phase of construction in the early 1900's. When asked about the possibility of resolving issues of citizenship outside of the courts through open discussions with Cottagers and members of Curve Lake First Nation as well as with representatives of every level of government in Canada, Drew Hayden Taylor admitted that he did not know how this conflict in perspectives and use of the waterways would be resolved. Since the ZOOM video conference was ended at 40 minutes when the free minutes ended, the question about what James Whetung needed to experience in his interactions with Cottagers in order to come to the table to work towards a resolution was not asked nor answered.

Read John 6:16-27. What is God calling us to be and do?

Know the history of what the land and waters provided Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years as well as the ways in which these gifts from Creator were maintained and these natural resources were used. Google WHITE EARTH NATION to learn about manoomin harvesting on the reservation set aside in northwestern Minnesota for seven Anishinaabe Peoples. Read the chapter by Aaron Mills/Waabishki Ma'iingan "What is a Treaty? On Contract and Mutual Aid" in the book by John Borrows and Michael Coyne THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP: REIMAGINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORICAL TREATIES, University of Toronto Press, 2017. Watch the CBC documentary COTTAGERS AND INDIANS by Drew Hayden Taylor on CBC GEM or CBC YOUTUBE, June 2020.

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