

Thursday in the Twelfth Week after Pentecost August 27, 2020

For the beginning of Sukkot, Jesus follows his family and journeys with his disciples from the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the city of Jerusalem. Sukkot is one of three feasts in which the Hebrew People make a pilgrimage to the Temple to celebrate Creator's gifts gathered from the crops planted earlier in the year. In the fall, the devout construct temporary shelters out in the fields to harvest their crops. For seven days beginning on the 15th day of the 7th month Tishrei in the Jewish calendar, readings from the Books of Deuteronomy and Ecclesiastes, prayers, and feasts take place every night. This is also a time when the Hebrew People remember being led out of slavery and sleeping in temporary shelters for forty years until the children of their children cross the River of Jordan and enter the freedom of living in the Promised Land.

Read John 7:14-36. What catches my attention in this Gospel passage?

After a few days of mingling among the crowds at the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus stands and begins to teach. All are amazed by what he says. Those in positions of power among the religious authorities are astounded that Jesus has not belonged to a school of biblical scholars yet Jesus speaks with immense knowledge. Jesus immediately tells everyone that his teachings come from the One who sent him. Jesus challenges all to use the gift of discernment in comparing all that he says against what they have learned from the Creator and the Great Spirit found in the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, and the teachings of those who apply this knowledge to the everyday practices of faithful devotion. For Jesus, each person listening participates in a very creative undertaking, learning from both the mind and the heart in a life-long journey. For Jesus, the key to this life of wisdom comes from a living relationship with Creator and the Great Spirit.

It is not surprising that the crowds at the Temple in Jerusalem are conflicted. Some believe that they are the ones who know the Law of Moses and follow its teachings. Others believe that Creator and the Great Spirit are at work in creation, bringing new life into being and giving new direction for those of faith to follow. Jesus is aware of this polarization in the crowd and knows that more time is needed for those who demonize him before a critical mass energizes them to act. Jesus knows that some who claim to know the Law of Moses continue to rant and rave about Jesus healing a sick man lying beside the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. Some could have remembered that at the Feast of the Passover, Jesus had fashioned a whip from strips of leather and drove out of the Temple all those who made money in the sale of cattle, sheep, and doves to throngs of worshippers seeking forgiveness or celebrating blessings from Creator and the Great Spirit. At that time, Jesus upturned the tables of these merchants and the loan sharks present to exploit the needy, spilling coins over the Temple grounds and stampeding the animals available to be bought as sacrificial offerings.

Some in the crowd are also puzzled about the silence of those in religious authority with respect to Jesus. These people speculate that the inaction of those in religious authority could be interpreted to mean that Jesus really is the Messiah, the Chosen One of the Lord God Almighty....the one to lead them out from under the tyranny of the Romans and relatives of Herod the Great into a new age with a new Jerusalem at the centre of a glorious Empire that rules the Earth. Jesus becomes upset by this

speculation. Provoked, Jesus challenges those who seek to exploit him and profit from his teachings. Jesus proclaims, **“I’m still with you for a little while before I go to the One who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me and where I am, you cannot come.” John 7:33-34.** This puzzling claim intensifies the convictions of those who oppose Jesus to hunt him down and do him harm. In the Johannine gospel, Jesus speaks plainly to those religious authorities who are intent on using violence to maintain their power and privilege. These religious authorities are lost without rooting themselves in the generosity and justice of Creator and the Great Spirit.

Yet, some in the crowds point out that Jesus also showed them miraculous signs so they believed in him.

Read John 7:14-36. What does God say to us in this passage?

The Teacher challenges you and I to develop our skills in discernment. Curiosity in exploring creation as we experience life will be helpful. Critical thinking about our observations and a quest for knowledge from others is essential. Emotional intelligence also gives our heart a significant role in seeking truth.

As children, youth, and young adults prepare to return to school in the next couple of weeks, skills in discernment will be tested again. Parents, grandparents, and caregivers will prepare students to learn in a different classroom environment and to keep themselves safe.

In the Anglican Church of Canada’s podcasts for Season 3 SACRED TEACHINGS: DISMANTLING RACISM, a number of Indigenous leaders are interviewed about their experiences of personal instances of racism as well as the impact of systemic forms of racism. In DIXIE, a young woman from Montreal Lake Cree Nation recounts her experiences as a child taking ballet classes in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and then going to school in that city when she was older. As a mother, she also speaks about the experiences of her son being threatened by two bullies in the playground out of sight of the Teacher monitoring that part of the yard but in sight of an adult sitting in a van and yet doing nothing as the scenario played out. This mother also describes the benefits of Molanosa Cultural Days when youth go out on the land and waters to connect with Creator and the Great Spirit. In HEART SURGERY, the Reverend Canon Laverne Jacobs recounts incidents of racism experienced at school and in the church. Canon Jacobs also speaks about his sister’s personal experiences of racism at school and the negative impact of systemic racism on this sister in the criminal justice system as a teenager. Their parents provided a home that valued both their traditional heritage and the teachings of the Anglican Church. Canon Jacobs is a member of Walpole Island First Nation at the mouth of the St. Clair River on Lake St. Clair midway between Windsor in Ontario and Detroit in Michigan. Walpole First Nation lives on unceded territories and consists of Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Odawa Peoples. In MY OWN CANOE, the Reverend Canon Norm Wesley tells about growing up as a member of the Moose Cree Nation at Moose Factory at the southern end of James Bay in Ontario. His mother arose early in the morning to wash dishes at the hospital. His father got him and his siblings up well before school in preparation for getting ready to go to work later in life. In growing up, Canon Wesley appreciated the faith of his mother and attended worship with her, particularly singing hymns in Cree. Canon Wesley also appreciated the work of his father in hunting, fishing, and trapping to provide for the family, relying on his canoe to do these things. Canon Wesley also appreciated the value which his parents placed on the need to learn speak Cree and listen to the

stories of the Elders. His father also taught him the value of attending school so he could learn how to speak English and live in both the Cree world and the white world. His father also taught him that he needed to construct his own canoe in order to live in two worlds. Canon Wesley recounts an instance of racism at a hotel when a white person was served even though he had arrived much earlier than the white person. Canon Wesley also speaks about the racism by a white teacher which threatened the personal safety of his sister. Canon Wesley is a teacher and pastor, knowledgeable and articulate about the need to establish an Indigenous Anglican Church and understands the systemic racism in government policies and practices which constructed church operated residential schools. A number of recommendations were made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission so that children, youth, and young adults will learn about personal forms of racism and systemic racism which continues to impact Indigenous Peoples in schools at every level of instruction today.

Read John 7:14-37. What does God ask us to be and do in this Gospel reading?

Develop the skills of discernment. Teach children, youth, and young adults about the generosity of Creator and the Great Spirit. Seize opportunities to oppose the use of violence which perpetuates the harm directed at individuals and other Peoples. Be wise. Support those who teach to find and use curriculum in their classes that promotes knowledge of injustices impacting Indigenous Peoples. Teach children, youth, and young adults how to keep safe and protect those who are vulnerable.