

Thursday in the Second Week of Advent: December 10, 2020

In Jerusalem, Jesus explains to those close to him that the Temple will be destroyed and terrible events would befall on the inhabitants of the city. On that day, signs will be evident in the sun, the moon, and the stars. The peoples of the earth will be at enmity with each other. Chaos will happen in every part of the world. The roaring of the seas will be heard and the power of their waves would be known that far inland. Jesus exhorts those close to him to be ready for this cataclysmic event to happen.

Read Luke 22:1-13. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

At that time, the Hebrew People were preparing for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, remembering the events in history which gave new life to their nation. Hebrew families planned to gather around their tables inside their homes to re-enact the night in which death passed over the homes of their ancestors, renewing their hope to be delivered from oppression once again by Creator and Great Spirit.

At that time, the religious leaders gathered to put their plans in place to have Jesus killed. Someone was needed to show the Temple soldiers where to find Jesus and arrest him. Among the 12 who were the closest males to Jesus, Judas Iscariot handled the money and opened himself to betray Jesus.

Aware of what was about to happen, Jesus instructs Peter and John to make preparations to celebrate Passover. Inside one of the gates of Jerusalem, Peter and John will look for a man who will be carrying a jar of water and then they will follow him into a house. That is the first task. Then, Peter and John are given a second task. Peter and John will speak to the owner of this house and give him a message: "The Teacher asks you, 'Where is your guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" Jesus tells Peter and John that the owner of this house will show them a furnished room. Jesus gives Peter and John a third task. Peter and John then will make preparations to celebrate Passover in that furnished room with the closest of the followers of Jesus present. Peter and John follow these instructions, finding the man at one of the gates of Jerusalem carrying a jar of water, finding the owner of a place of safety in Jerusalem, and finding a furnished guest room on an upper floor. Peter and John then prepare the feast to celebrate the intervention of the Lord God Almighty at a particular time in history, delivering the Hebrew People from slavery in Egypt and setting them free in the wilderness to be nourished daily.

It is fascinating to ponder about how Creator and Great Spirit acts in human history and brings about a new age in creation. Those with religious and some political authority need help to finally launch their plan to do harm to Jesus. In spite of popular perceptions, those who claim to have authority in the end have limited power.

Although Peter and John belong to an inner circle who have listened to Jesus teach about what must come to pass in his life and watched Jesus bring healing and wholeness to so many over the course of three short years, they too seem blissfully unaware about what is about to happen. However, Peter and John are prepared to follow the directions which Jesus gives to them, regardless of how impossible these assigned tasks seem to be. In order to complete these tasks given to them by Jesus, Peter and

John open themselves so that Creator and Great Spirit will show them whom among the crowds they are to trust and follow.

The man carrying the water jar also needs to be aware that he will be followed and that he will be safe as he leads two men to the owner of a particular house. The owner of this large house with an empty upper room also receives some form of revelation so he can be open to play his particular role as a host for an amazing feast in the drama about to unfold for the history of all the Peoples of this creation.

Reread Luke 22:1-13. What is God saying to us in this passage?

Each of the characters in this gospel reading play different parts accomplishing the intentions of Creator and Great Spirit. Some justify the evil of their plans and actions. Others open themselves to accomplish so much more.

In the past week, so much happened to move forward relationships between non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Peoples in this part of Turtle Island.

On Tuesday, December 2, 2020, Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller announced that Liberals will not be able to put an end to boil water advisories before March 2021. Minister Miller stated publicly, "Today, we are providing sustained funding in the spirit of partnership. We're listening to communities, and we want to let them know that our government is going to be there for the long run." With this new collaborative approach to working with the leadership of First Nations communities, Minister Miller also stated publicly, "What (Indigenous) communities want is not an Ottawa imposed deadline. It's a long term commitment for access to clean water." More funding needed to be allocated not only to build and repair both water and wastewater systems but also to ensure that training in water systems infrastructure is available to water operators in Indigenous communities. Minister Miller also said, "The government is moving to give First Nations more control over solving their water problems through self-determination." In a follow-up question posed by CBC Parliamentary Bureau Journalist Olivia Stefanovich, Minister Miller spoke candidly about the promise made in 2015 that the Liberals would eliminate water advisories in Indigenous communities by March 2021, noting that the government did not appreciate the state of affairs of decay in some of the public infrastructure over decades of neglect. Minister Miller stated that resolving these longstanding water advisories has become part of the government's journey ahead working more closely with leadership from First Nations. Pimatisiwin Nipi sent letters to Prime Minister Trudeau as well as Ministers Miller and Bennett seeking a more collaborative approach in water and wastewater infrastructure projects so that the federal government begins working with the leadership in Indigenous communities so that safe, clean water can be available in their homes. The Assembly of First Nations Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald noted publicly that most of the long term drinking water advisories in Canada were in Ontario. Chief Archibald has long advocated for Indigenous Services Canada to work with her team in the future to provide safe, clean water to FN homes. AFN Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde stated publicly, "Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental right."

Evacuees from Neskantaga FN have been housed together by Indigenous Services Canada in the Victoria Inn in Thunder Bay for 52 days and expect to be there into the new year before repairs are completed

and drinking water tests come back safe over 14 days. Ms. Stefanovich has interviewed children, parents, Elders, and members of Neskantaga FN in a variety of news articles on CBC News.

On Wednesday, December 3, 2020, Justice Minister David Lametti and Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett announced the reintroduction in Parliament of a bill authored by NDP MP Romeo Saganash to implement the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Minister Bennett stated publicly, "Today is another step forward as we continue to chart a new path together toward a renewed relationship and a better, more inclusive future based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnerships". Pimatisiwin Nipi supported campaigns in 2018 sending signed cards asking for the implementation of the UNDRIP in the policies and practices of the federal government.

On Saturday, December 5, 2020, in the Insight Section of the Toronto Star, Chief Dean Owen from Pikangikum FN celebrated the arrival and installation of high speed internet through low level satellites put in place by Elon Musk and his SpaceX corporation. In the past, the Canadian Mental Health Services in Kenora could not provide online counselling to youth and young adults who became suicidal or who survived the deaths of friends and family members. On-line counselling was not available to victims and witnesses of domestic violence. Members of Pikangikum will be connected to the rest of the world through a reliable service. OPP Officers will be able to maintain contact with partners and children living in other parts of Ontario. Teachers will be able to connect with family and friends around the world. Ongoing health care can be better provided with more reliable internet services. Earlier in the year, Chief Dean Owen and Council wrote a letter to the Justice Minister asking for the implementation of Indigenous knowledge and practices in keeping those involved with the criminal justice system could stay in Pikangikum and benefit from on-line court participation. In the newspaper article, Chief Dean Owen noted that the half-way house had been recently completed in Pikangikum so those involved in the criminal justice system could not remain in their community. Member of Pikangikum FN are now able to be connected to the rest of the world through reliable internet connectivity. The Elders were curious so they asked Chief Dean Owen, "When will we be able to talk to aliens?"

Reread Luke 22:1-13. What is God asking us to be and do?

Consider making a donation designated to INDIGENOUS WATER PROJECTS through your worshipping community. Consider telling a friend about this opportunity as a way of keeping the meaning of Christmas in the forefront of your efforts to celebrate the generosity of Creator and Great Spirit. Continue to pray for the evacuees of Neskantaga FN in Thunder Bay and all those who are providing tangible supports to them during these times.

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