

Thursday in the Eighth Week after Pentecost July 30, 2020

After Jesus utters his last words on the cross, he dies. Among the crowd, women who had travelled with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem stand watching at a distance. Mary of Magdala had been made whole by Jesus, released from afflictions which had trapped her and held her in their power. Mary the mother of Jesus and his half-brothers James and Joseph watched her first born son die a cruel death. Mary the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John had learned much about the generosity of Creator and wondered what would become of her sons. We are also introduced to another follower of Jesus Joseph of Arimathea who exercised authority among the religious leaders of the time and yet kept it secret that he valued all that he had learned from the crucified Galilean.

Read Matthew 27:55-66. What catches my attention in this reading of the Gospel?

The twelve disciples of Jesus were men and these men would provide leadership in the earliest gatherings of the Church. Yet, the followers of Jesus identified at the crucifixion were women. Creator chooses to give these women a very different kind of authority in this creation for all time.

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the social, political, and economic elite among the Hebrew people and knew the Roman governor of the province of Judea serving under the Emperor Tiberius. Joseph of Arimathea treats the body of his Teacher with the same dignity with which he treated the dynamic and thought-provoking Human Being who introduced him to life with Creator in all its fullness. In order to protect this body, Joseph of Arimathea rolls a stone in front of the tomb.

Creator speaks to many with words to guide them through painful circumstances. Creator touches their hearts and holds their anguish. Creator even gives them visions which depict an alternate view of the world in which they find themselves.

It is fascinating to consider the other characters in these dramatic events. The religious authorities join with the political authority in the land and devise a plan to continue to exercise their control over the situation. For very different reasons, the decision is made to seal the stone rolled in front of the place where the body of the crucified Jesus has been laid and to post a guard to prevent theft of this body. Like many in positions of power, their convictions about their authority to control events prove to be false and empty.

Read Matthew 27:55-66. What is God saying in this passage?

For Indigenous Peoples, a treaty is not an agreement among stakeholders about access to resources, nor a contract signed by parties at a time and place spelling out rights and responsibilities. For Indigenous Peoples, a treaty is first and foremost a mechanism for developing just relationships. Both Indigenous Peoples and Settlers agree to live together in a good way, established through discussion and persuasion.

At Council Fires, Indigenous Peoples met as chiefs of clans, clan mothers, and extended family lineages in seeking to resolve problems through carefully structured conversations which acknowledged Creator's generosity and provision for the needs of everyone. Remedies for changes in circumstances and for harm caused by particular individuals are sought through lengthy discussion and various kinds of ceremonies which honour Creator and participants. Indigenous legal traditions are based on communities finding a way forward so that everyone can live together in a good way. Members of

families, clans, nations, and confederations of nations find ways to be in right relationship with each other as well as with the spirits of the natural world, particularly those of Animal and Plant Relatives. Harmony is essential. Balance is sought among many different perspectives and duties of care. Everyone sitting around the sacred fires were considered to be gifted by Creator, each with a role to play and equal in value to all others in the circle. On traditional territories among the Great Lakes Indigenous Peoples, a cycle of life was established for thousands of years. When the sun begins to warm the earth, the Peoples move to the maple sugar bushes to collect the sap and to the clusters of silver birch to peel the bark for making canoes. In the heat of the summer, the Peoples move to the berry patches to pick strawberries and then blueberries. Fishing enriches their diet with oils and nutrients. With longer days, this is a time to gather with relatives and other Peoples joining together to dance, pray, court, and catch up on the news. As the days become shorter and the sunlight weaker, the Peoples move again to their fall camps to harvest the wild rice, to catch some geese, and to hunt larger animals. Families go out on the land assigned to them for hunting and setting traps. As the cold brings the snows, families and clans gather into winter villages to tell stories about their ancestors, the lessons of life, and all of their relations which Creator made in the worlds around them. The Anishinaabe Peoples are known as the Peoples of the Forest. In order to flourish, a great deal of land is needed in order for there to be enough food to eat and flourish over the years. Traditional territories are determined by the constant negotiation of right relations between relatives and other Peoples living nearby or travelling on Creator's lands and waters.

The image of a canoe or a ship used in a Covenant Chain wampum belt depicts two Peoples navigating along a waterway through moving currents, along changing shorelines, and movement of air in the sky. This journey by canoe and by ship continues. Unlike an agreement to share resources, Indigenous Peoples and Settlers continue to be working to maintain right relationship long after the resources have been depleted. Unlike a contract which spells out how goods and services will be provided for a short period of time, Indigenous Peoples and Settlers remain connected and continue to move through changing circumstances and times. Although the Supreme Court of Canada has developed an extensive body of knowledge about Indigenous law, spiritual practices, oral history, and the intricacies about decision-making among Indigenous Peoples, the context in which treaties are established and maintained is social, political, economic, and spiritual. Indigenous Peoples and Settlers need to talk with each other and find ways to listen to what is said. The resolution of problems and the re-establishment of right relations is better found outside of federal and provincial courts. Over time, Canada has been undergoing a transformation in developing collaborative ways in which to keep people safe and ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met, involving municipal, provincial, and federal governments as well as Indigenous representatives. Since 1764, much has changed for Indigenous Peoples and Settlers, including the development of a complex set of intergovernmental relationships in Canada.

Over 850,000 people from coast to coast to coast claim First Nation heritage. Of those, about 49% live on Reserves while 51% live among Settler communities. About 46 % of First Nations are under the age of 24 years so the population of youth who are surviving a variety of afflictions which caused the deaths of their ancestors are increasing on reserves. Over 452,000 people claim Metis heritage. Over 60,000 people claimed Inuit heritage.

Through colonization and more than three centuries of systemic racism, it would be respectful to ask Chiefs and Councils, whether hereditary or elected, as well as Elders, Clan Mothers, Knowledge Keepers, Educators, and Healers about their dreams for their respective communities. These are the Indigenous

Peoples who have hopes for their members and want their Peoples to be safe and to flourish, feeding and caring for themselves as sovereign Peoples in treaty relationships with Settlers. It would be compassionate to ask how we as Settlers can help make changes happen in order to improve opportunities to better share the resources which Creator has given to everyone for our common good.

Read Matthew 27:55-66. What is God calling us to be and do?

Creator brings forward people who have minds to think about how to meet the needs of everyone and protect Creator's creation as well as hearts full of compassion to challenge injustices and put an end to brutality. Let us get to know the dreams which Creator has given to Indigenous Peoples. Let us learn to listen and ask questions so that Indigenous Peoples and Settlers can resolve historical and complex inequities. Let us seek to do our part in re-establishing and maintaining right relationship.

Watch the Anglican Church of Canada SACRED TEACHINGS Season 3 on her website.

Read the collection of articles edited by John Borrows and Michael Coyle THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP: REIMAGINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORICAL TREATIES (University of Toronto Press 2017).

Read the book written by Ignatia Broker NIGHT FLYING WOMAN: AN OJIBWAY NARRATIVE (Borealis Books, Minnesota Historical Society Press 1983) in the Native Voices series.

David