

REFLECTION FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF PENTECOST June 25, 2020

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travels with his closest followers along with their kin and friends so his teachings prepares them for what is about to happen. His words however baffle his companions. In spite of what his followers will see and hear, Jesus wants them to be clear about who has authority in all of creation.

Read Matthew 20: 17-28. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?

Jesus knows what will happen but he continues to walk towards the cross and beyond. It is not easy to walk in this creation and in what Christians call “the new creation” at the same time. In the usual rendering of the Greek, Matthew identifies Jesus as THE SON OF MAN or in a more inclusive translation from the Common English Bible THE HUMAN ONE. Jesus wants his followers to know that he is unique, a human of this creation and a Being in a creation which is neither made of the same materials as found in this creation nor within the constraints of time but at one with Creator.

It is not surprising that his followers do not understand this teaching. The mother of the sons Zebedee asks the most logical question which any parent would want to ask, “Will my sons be the greatest in this new creation where you will go?” Jesus wants to know if the sons of Zebedee understand the question which their mother has asked of him. With enthusiasm, these brothers affirm their willingness to enter into this new life proclaimed by Jesus.

It is amazing that Jesus knows what will happen to him in Jerusalem and knows what will happen to his followers on their own respective journeys.

Read Matthew 20: 17-28. What is God saying in this passage?

There is no short cut on our journey in this creation if we want to walk in a good way.

Jesus knows how wealth and power are distributed in this creation and what happens to those who challenge those who possess wealth and power. Jesus knows that those with religious authority and those who lose themselves in the application of religious truths will turn him over to the political authorities of the Empire who rule in that part of creation at that time. Jesus points out that his followers need to be prepared to live very differently than those who claim to own wealth and use power to maintain what they have accumulated irregardless of the consequences. Jesus identifies these as being tyrants, invested in protecting their wealth and the power which they have gained at the expense of others. Jesus challenges those close to him to be radically different and learn to walk the path to that place outside the city of Jerusalem where he was put to death on a cross. **“Whoever wants to be first among you will be your slave---just as the Human One didn’t come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many peoples.” Matthew 20: 27, 28.** Jesus uses strong language. In contrast to those who are tyrants, Jesus identifies himself as someone without any wealth or power at all. Jesus makes it clear that his followers must be willing to give up wealth and power in order to provide leadership in this creation.

Following the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and confirming the three principles set out by this decree, the Treaty of Niagara in 1764 renewed the Covenant of Friendship with the Haudenosaunee and generated a new Covenant of Friendship with 24 Anishinaabe First Nations around the Great Lakes. The

Representative of the Crown made arrangements to meet with these Indigenous Peoples on their traditional territories, participated in ceremonies honouring Creator, and negotiated agreements to maintain peace so that Indigenous Peoples and Settlers could flourish together. Treaties were collaborative efforts to share resources and to provide assistance for Indigenous Peoples to transition into new ways of living on their traditional territories. Subsequent Treaties were understood as covenant agreements about the maintenance of peace, the promotion of commerce, and the use of Indigenous Lands. Negotiations took place on a nation-to-nation basis. Indigenous spirituality and ceremonies took up a great deal of time and undergirded the discussions about the terms being negotiated. While the Crown kept a written document, the Indigenous Peoples maintained oral histories about what took place and the specifics of the agreement with the Crown. Indigenous Chiefs agreed to share their traditional territories with Settlers in exchange for treaty benefits, including annuity payments, reserved lands, education, provisions in times of famine, medical care in dealing with diseases and ongoing health care, rights to hunt and fish on their traditional territories, and the means to transition into agriculture and later into fishing as well as the use of other natural resources. Eye witness accounts from interpreters, members of trading companies, wives of treaty negotiators, clergy, journalists, politicians, and political administrators as well as Indigenous Elders and treaty-making participants provide a wealth of information. Winona Wheeler who is a member of Fisher Cree First Nation in Treaty Four Territory and an Associate Professor of the Department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Saskatchewan has pointed out, "What we know today is that the federal government of Canada is steadfastly wedded to the written texts of the Treaties and their interpretations of the content, has reneged on its fiduciary Treaty obligations, and has made little to no movement toward reaching a common understanding with Treaty First Nations that reflects First Nations oral accounts." Dr. Wheeler hopes that the original intent of the Treaty Relationship will be acknowledged and implemented to honour Creator and the Indigenous ancestors who made sacred promises in sharing the land and its resources with non-Indigenous Settlers.

At this time in the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the Settlers of Canada, Jesus teaches his followers to walk the way of the cross in taking leadership at every level of government from coast to coast to coast.

Read Matthew 20: 17-28. What is God calling us to be and do in this gospel passage?

The leadership which Jesus promotes is not based on maintaining wealth and using power in order to protect what we have received from our ancestors and accumulated during our lifetime. The leadership which Jesus calls us to be and equips us to do is based on how he lived and what he did. Serve with the same passion and purpose which Jesus served Creator and Creator's peoples.

Watch the Mennonite Central Committee [NATION TO NATION: HONOURING THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF 1763](#) on YouTube as a delegation of Indigenous leaders as well as the Archbishop Mark MacDonald travel to London in the United Kingdom to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the signing of this document. Watch [JUSTICE MURRAY SINCLAIR ON THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF 1763](#) at another celebration on the traditional territories of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation for another celebration. Read [NO SURRENDER: THE LAND REMAINS INDIGENOUS](#) by Sheldon Krasowski to get an overview of treaties, particularly those numbered treaties signed in western Canada.

David Franks