

Thursday in the Twenty-First Week after Pentecost: October 29, 2020

Jesus teaches the crowds about how to pray, to listen to Creator and the Great Spirit, and to act following the direction given to those who hear the good news. As a result, Jesus comes into conflict with the religious and political leaders in his generation who lay burdens upon the crowd and do nothing to ease the weight of these unrealistic expectations.

Read Luke 11:53-12:12. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

Jesus seeks to free us. However, at this point in his journey, the religious and political authorities seek to destroy him. The crowds come out on the land and beside the waters in thousands to see what Jesus does and to listen to what he has to say.

In baking bread, yeast combines with sugar, salt, and water so that the flour mixture can rise with some warmth and time. In the pan in an oven, the dough rises more with the addition of heat over time. Fresh bread nourishes the body. Jesus warns his disciples and members of the crowd to beware of the yeast used by the religious and political leaders to make themselves appear bigger and more powerful than they really are in this earthly reality. Jesus reminds those who are open to learning from him, saying “Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing is secret that will not become known.” Luke 12:2. Jesus then shares what will happen to him when the religious and political leaders finally arrest him, belittle and mock him, put him on trial, physically abuse him, and put him to death on a cross. Jesus also promises that those who not only see him and listen to him but live according to his teachings will be tested as he would be and will be nourished by Creator and the Great Spirit at this time of trial as he would be spiritually upheld in his time of anguish.

Reread Luke 11:53-12:12. What is God saying to us in this passage?

The search for truth is much more complicated than just understanding what has happened in history, knowing who benefits from the way in which power is distributed in this creation, and acknowledging those who are most vulnerable. Jesus points out that the search for truth involves establishing and maintaining a relationship with Creator and the Great Spirit each and every day under any set of circumstances.

The search for truth sets us free from religious and political bullies who do whatever they can to establish and maintain their privilege and power at the expense of others and even creation herself.

On October 8, 2020, leaks in the water intake system at Neskantaga FN prevented the reservoir for the water treatment plant to fill completely. As a result, the water treatment plant stopped distributing water to the school, health centre, band office, and homes at night so the reservoir could fill more fully for daytime use. On October 12, 2020, a film was observed on top of the water in the reservoir so the pumps were stopped for daytime use too. Initial contact with Indigenous Services Canada became frustrating as requests for help were denied. Chief Chris Moonais began to send the most vulnerable in the community to Thunder Bay. By October 19, 2020, the oily film contaminating the drinking water was identified as hydrocarbon. Minister Marc Miller acknowledged the miscommunications with

bureaucrats and renewed the federal commitment to end the 25 year old long-term boil water advisory. The new water treatment plant was supposed to be completed by 2018, originally estimated at a cost of \$8 M. A further \$4 M will fund further work needed to get water from the water treatment plant to homes. Minister Miller acknowledged that the wastewater system is not compatible with the water treatment plant so further work is needed here too. By October 21, 2020, about 175 of the most vulnerable members of the community were flown to Thunder Bay, expressing fear about being disoriented in living in a large city and about increasing their risk of exposure to Covid-19. These evacuees were the elderly, infants, and people with chronic health conditions. Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Alvin Fiddler wrote a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau outlining the need for an emergency response from the federal government and the need of the Indigenous People of this community to have safe, clean water in their homes. Some remained at Neskantaga FN to keep empty homes warm enough to prevent pipes from freezing, feed the dogs, and to prepare for the return of their evacuees. Former Chief Wayne Moonais left Neskantaga FN but then he returned to help, noting the difficulties of obtaining water on the unstable ice on the lake by bucket in order to obtain water for flushing toilets. At this time of year, members of community are usually out on the land hunting as well as cutting firewood for the winter. Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and NDP MPP Sol Mamakwa along with technical advisors from Indigenous Services Canada and Matawa First Nations Management visited Chief Chris Moonais at Neskantaga FN on October 26, 2020. The Chief and Council of Neskantaga FN developed a list of 7 tasks to be completed with measurable goals in order for it to be safe for the evacuees to return to their homes. The Chief and Council want more than just meetings to happen to talk about their community's need for safe, clean water in their homes.

Reread Luke 11:53-12:12. What is God calling us to be and to do?

Listen to the CBC Listen podcast entitled NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION EVACUATED OVER WTER CONCERNS on The Current with Interviewer Matt Galloway speaking with a variety of members of Neskantaga FN, including Allan Moonais, Chief Chris Moonais as well as Chief Chris Skead of Wauzhushk Onigum Nation where a boil water advisory was lifted a month ago. Pray for those who have been evacuated to Thunder Bay. Pray for those still at Neskantaga FN caring for their homes until the evacuees can return. Consider writing letters of support to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Minister Marc Miller, Minister Carolyn Bennett, Chief Chris Moonais, and Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler so that homes as well as the school, health centre, and band office in Neskantaga FN may have safe, clean water and a working wastewater system. Help put an end to over 25 years of a long-term boil water advisory.

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