

## Thursday in the Sixteenth Week after Pentecost: September 24, 2020

After his baptism and 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus returns to Galilee and begins to teach in the synagogue in the town of Nazareth where he was raised as a child.

### Read Luke 4:14-30. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?

At the beginning of this passage, Luke says that Jesus experiences the power of the Great Spirit who moved across the waters at the beginning of time and space like a mighty wind even before land emerged from these waters and before the stars, planets, and moons were placed in the heavens. In this way, Jesus walks among the hills of Galilee, along the shores, and amid those who live in the villages and towns of this part of Creator's earth.

On the Sabbath in the synagogue where he worshipped as a child, Jesus opens the sacred scrolls and reads the words that Creator and the Great Spirit gave to the prophet Isaiah to proclaim to their ancestors: **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. The Lord has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."** Luke 4:18,19. Jesus rolls up the scroll and hands it back. Jesus sits down and everyone waits for him to begin teaching. Jesus says, **"Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."** Luke 4:27. Everyone was amazed by these words and by the authority by which Jesus proclaimed what Creator and the Great Spirit were doing among them at that moment in time and space. Some are excited by this message. A new age was coming into existence.

The birth of a new creation was happening before their eyes and within their hearing. For anyone who has participated in the birthing of a human, this experience is messy and is not usually very quiet. It takes a lot of effort to give birth and to welcome new life into the world. It is exhilarating to hold a newborn, to count the number of fingers and toes, and be amazed by this gift of life.

However, this powerful proclamation sets in motion a variety of unexpected responses. How is it that people cannot celebrate what is good and right and wonderful? The poor will be made wealthy. Those who are bound will be set free. Those who are in jail will be pardoned. The virus of racism will be eradicated. Those who suffer violence and injustice will be valued and everyone will have access to the resources which they need to live. Each family will be given land and waters to provide for themselves, their offspring, and the strangers in their midst. Some of the people in Nazareth did not accept this good news. When pressed by the beginnings of their rage, Jesus pointed out that Creator and the Great Spirit sent those who were anointed like Elijah and Elisha to those who did not belong to the twelve tribes of Judah and Israel. Instead, Elijah and Elisha were sent to others who were in need--- to a widow who did not have enough food to feed herself and her child and to a leper who commanded the armies of an ancient enemy. This murderous rage propelled the people in Nazareth to take Jesus up to the edge of a cliff outside the town so they could throw him over the edge. However, their rage was so intense that they became blind and deaf. Jesus was able to slip away and continue his journey, proclaiming the good news of the beginning of a new age.

### **Read Luke 4:14-30. What is God saying to us?**

Those who honour Indigenous Peoples are being encouraged to wear orange shirts on September 30 in order to demonstrate support for those who survived residential schools. At the age of 6, Phyllis Webstad prepared to attend her first day of residential school as a member of the Shuswap People from Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (Canoe Creek Indian Band). Her grandmother had taken her shopping and purchased an orange shirt. Phyllis Webstad was excited to wear this bright shirt. However, when she arrived at St. Joseph's Mission Residential School outside William's Lake in central British Columbia in 1973, her shirt was taken away from her. The orange shirt represented a part of her home and an important piece of her life as an Indigenous child. Phyllis Webstad felt terror on her first day of a year away from her home. Phyllis Webstad experienced other traumas. The message that she received was the same message that was given to over 150,000 children and youth in residential schools between 1831 and 1996. Indigenous languages as well as cultural and spiritual practices were not as good as those of European Settlers. The purpose of residential schools was to take all that was Indigenous out of children and youth by whatever means possible. Residential school survivors learned to stay silent and to feel shame.

From 2009 to 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission organized over 300 gatherings from coast to coast to coast so that more than 6000 residential school survivors could tell their stories about what happened to them. Justice Murray Sinclair noted that these survivors demonstrated great courage and trust so that their stories could become part of a permanent historical record for future generations of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis children and youth as well as for non-Indigenous Settlers. The Commission also noted that the 3,200 children identified by federal government as having died of tuberculosis, malnutrition, and other health conditions associated with poor living conditions does not come close to the actual number of children and youth who died in residential schools. Removed from their families, clans, and communities, seven generations of Indigenous children and youth lost key elements of their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their language, culture, and spirit. The legacy of residential schools resulted in Indigenous Peoples having the highest unemployment rate, the biggest gap in income earnings, an over-representation of children and youth in the care of child protection agencies, an over-representation of Indigenous children, youth, and adults incarcerated in the criminal justice system, the lowest life expectancy rates in Canada, the highest suicide rates for children, youth, and young adults, higher levels of health problems, issues of inadequate housing, and both long-term and short-term water advisories for Indigenous communities. Surviving the policies and practices of cultural genocide requires a great deal of resiliency among Indigenous Peoples and significant effort in reconciliation by Settlers.

Justice Murray Sinclair also noted that the criminal justice system also failed those who survived residential schools since only a very small number of criminal charges were ever laid against the staff of 150 federally funded church operated residential schools in Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified 94 Calls for Action that would move Settlers towards right relationships with Indigenous Peoples in sharing the care of the lands and waters of Turtle Island for future generations. 5 of these Calls for Action focus on Education for Reconciliation (Calls 62

to 65). Federal, provincial, and territorial governments are called in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Indigenous Peoples, and educators to make age-appropriate curriculum available to every student from Kindergarten to Grade 12 as well as for students in post-secondary schools. The education of senior people in various levels of government was included. Research initiatives in collaboration with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation were identified as being necessary. These Calls to Action are intended to build capacity in students and government leadership for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. There are 6 other Calls to Action to remove the use of physical discipline in schools and achieve equity in the differences in the education between Indigenous students and those of the dominant Settler society at every level. There are 4 other Calls to Action to ensure that instruction in Indigenous languages are available at every educational level.

**Read Luke 4:14-30. What is God asking us to be and do?**

Ask your children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews what they are learning about the history of Indigenous Peoples and the experiences of Indigenous children in school? How are Indigenous Peoples being honoured in your local schools and places of worship? What learning experiences have you set for yourself in the coming year to increase your knowledge of building right relationships between Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in Canada?

Read FINAL REPORT OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA, VOLUME 1: HONOURING THE TRUTH, RECONCILING FOR THE FUTURE, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015.

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