

Thursday in the Third Week of Easter: April 22, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus returns from the wilderness where he had been tempted three times but remained steadfast, clear in his knowledge and love for Creator and Great Spirit. In Galilee, Jesus then begins to teach in the places of worship. In Nazareth, Jesus opens the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and teaches that these words of promise are being fulfilled in their hearing. Their amazement turns to anger when these worshippers realize that Jesus comes from Nazareth too. Their rage drives Jesus out of the town to the edge of a cliff but Jesus slips away walking through their midst to continue his journey. A week later in another place of worship at nearby Capernaum, Jesus begins to teach again and astounds those who listen to his words. In this gathering, Jesus hears voices coming out of a man and responds by setting this man free, breaking their destructive power over this worshipper and putting an end to their torment.

Read Luke 5:1-11. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?

Another day, the crowds seek out Jesus to hear more from him, pressing him down to the edge of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus sees an opportunity to speak and to put some distance between himself and the gathering crowd so he asks one of the fishers cleaning his nets to take him out onto the waters. Jesus had already met Simon in the place of worship in Capernaum, visited his home, healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever, and enjoyed a meal. Simon had also listened to teach in the synagogue in Capernaum and talk at his table in his own home with members of his family. Just off the shoreline, Simon listened again to Jesus teach about the goodness, generosity, and acceptance of Creator and Great Spirit. By the time that Jesus finishes speaking, Simon has heard and seen enough to develop some trust in him. When Simon is asked by Jesus to sail farther out from land, he sets out into deeper waters. Simon hears Jesus ask him to throw his freshly cleaned nets over the side of the fishing vessel but objects to this request. Simon and his fisher friends had been out in the previous night and returned to shore without having caught anything. Jesus sits in silence, looking at Simon and waits for him to do as he was asked to do. Simon lowers the nets into the deeper waters and is amazed by what he discovers. His nets are full to overflowing. Simon needs to call his fisher friends to bring out the second boat to help with the catch. By the time that the nets are pulled up, both boats are filled to overflowing with fish. Once on the shore with their catch taken off to the fish market, Simon as well as James and John, the sons of Zebedee, find themselves caught up in another kind of net cast out by Jesus. Simon responds to the message which Jesus communicates through his generous actions, **"Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"**

Luke 5:8. Like others among the Hebrew People who were called by the Source of All Life and Love to a special life of leadership, Simon acknowledges how ill prepared he is to accomplish all that has been asked of him.

In the Johannine gospel, the Risen Jesus meets with Simon as well as with the brothers James and John plus four of the other disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. On the beach, the Risen Jesus prepares a fire and starts cooking some fish along with some bread. These seven fishers are tired in their grief and after a fruitless night casting nets into empty waters. Nearing the shoreline, the Risen

Jesus tells these fishers to put down their nets on the other side of their boat and are amazed that these nets are filled to overflowing. Simon and the brothers James and John had come full circle, returning in memory to that first time when Jesus called them to walk with him. When the disciples come ashore this second time with these nets full to overflowing, the Risen Jesus asks for some of these freshly caught fish to add to the meal which he had started. After this feast, the Risen Jesus challenges Simon to provide the same kind of leadership as Jesus had demonstrated in walking the way of the cross.

Reread Luke 5:1-11. What is God saying to us?

In her book **BRAIDING SWEETGRASS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS (Milkweed Editions Canada, 2013)**, Robin Wall Kimmerer explores the mystery of the return of the salmon to the rivers in Oregon and their relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of that part of Turtle Island. Dr. Kimmerer starts this chapter with the journey of the salmon well beyond the crashing surf at the base of Cascade Head where the salmon have been swimming together for several years as they mature. Way out at sea, something stirs inside the flesh of the salmon like an ancient clock of bone and blood telling each of these creatures that it is time and then some kind of floating compass within their flesh orients them to return to the shores and the mouths of rivers from which they came. Along this coast, countless coves make up the shoreline and numerous waterways flow through the rainforest to the ocean's edge. Often, fog shrouds the land and waters. Elders recount stories of canoes landing on sand spits far from their home villages and family members lighting fires with driftwood on the shore to act as beacons when canoes are overdue. When canoes arrive laden with food from the sea and the coastlands, the fishers and hunters are honoured with dances and songs as well as with faces alight with gratitude. The Indigenous Peoples also watch and wait for their brothers and sisters whose canoe is their own scaly bodies plying their way through the ocean towards specific waterways leading inland to ancient spawning beds. As they watch and wait, the women sew more dentalia shells onto their finest garments in which they will dance. Members of the whole communities gather Alderwood and pile these branches for the fires to cook the feast. Huckleberry skewers are prepared. Nets are mended. Up on the headland overlooking the ocean, the spruce needles and grasses have dried through the warmer summer months. At the right time, the Fire Keeper places a coal among a nest of cedar bark and twisted grasses while others do the same around the meadow on Cascade Head about 450 metres or 1400 feet above the shoreline. The fires catch and flames race on the wind until they are stopped by the green wall of the rainforest. The night is set alight as a beacon to bring their brothers and sisters in from the depths of the ocean to the mouth of the river below. In this ceremony, the Indigenous People say to the salmon, "Come, come. Flesh of my flesh. My brothers and sisters. Come back to the river where your lives began. We have made a welcome feast in your honour." As one body, schools of salmon smell the waters of their natal stream and swim, finding rest in the tidal pools and preparing to make the transition from the saltwater of the ocean to the freshwater of the inland waterways. As the first salmon begin to swim up past the river mouth towards their natal spawning beds, Indigenous Peoples gather to sing a welcoming song on the shores of the rivers and streams. Nets are left on the shores and spears remain at home. Only after four days have passed during which throngs of salmon have safely swum upstream is the First Salmon taken by the most honoured fisher in the Indigenous community and prepared on a cedar plank with a bed of ferns

for a communal feast. Water is brought forward in a cup in this ceremony honouring all of the waters which connect salmon and Human Beings. Water is Life. Indigenous People dance in long lines, singing and giving thanks for all that has been given to them. Salmon bones are returned to the rivers and streams. The heads of these salmon are placed to face upstream so their spirits continue their journey with throngs of their brothers and sisters to their spawning grounds. When the weirs and fishing nets are put in place, Elders remind everyone, "Take only what you need and let the rest go by and the fish will last forever." Stories are told about the first coming of the salmon and the gratitude expressed by the Skunk Cabbage for their arrival. When the drying racks are full with food for the winter, the fishing stops. The different types of salmon and their abundance ensured that the Indigenous Peoples would not go hungry. Upstream, others hauled salmon out of the waters to eat and the land was fertilized by their nitrogen rich remains. The forests also benefitted from the generosity of the salmon.

Reread Luke 5:1-11. What does God ask us to be and do?

Support Indigenous and non-Indigenous efforts to restore shorelines and their aquatic environments as well as to overcome the barriers such as dams and locks so that salmon can rest on their journey upstream and reach their traditional spawning beds. Challenge those who use these waterways to carry away chemicals used in resource extraction or to enrich soil or to increase the yield from plants. Challenge those whose use of waters destroys aquatic life for the generation of nuclear power or for industrial and manufacturing production. Honour the wisdom and ceremonies of Indigenous Peoples in ensuring that the abundance provided by Creator and Great Spirit for the next seven generations to come.

David Franks