

Thursday in the Week of the Baptism of our Lord: January 14, 2021

After being led in the wilderness by the Great Spirit and facing temptations over 40 days, Jesus returns to Galilee. John the Baptizer was arrested but Jesus continues to communicate the same message about the presence of Creator at work in the world, the need to repent, and the imperative to believe in the good news. Jesus gathers fishermen as his earliest followers. By healing and preaching, Jesus demonstrates his authority.

Read Mark 2:1-12. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

Jesus goes home but the crowds seek him out and find him. People are keen to hear what Jesus has to say. Four come with a different purpose for they carry on a mat a companion who had been paralyzed. Unable to get inside the home, these four become creative and carry him up onto the roof. Being persistent, these four begin to scratch out the mortar and pluck the stones which opening the roof over the head of Jesus. After creating large enough hole in the roof, these four friends lower the mat until their companion who was paralyzed lies at the feet of Jesus.

It is always amazing what a few persistent people of faith can accomplish.

In a teaching moment, Jesus steps into controversy, saying to the one who was paralyzed and lying at his feet, **“Son, your sins are forgiven!” Mark 2:5.** Some in the crowd believe that the man on the mat had committed some terrible offense against the Lord God Almighty or the Hebrew People in order to be afflicted in this way. Jesus challenges this conviction. Some of the religious authorities began to question how Jesus could claim to make such a pronouncement and have the authority to forgive sins.

It is also amazing that people can use their religious convictions to assign responsibility to the afflicted for their anguish and physical limitations. This blaming behaviour inhibits compassionate responses.

Jesus is clear. He has the authority to forgive sins as the One sent by Creator and Great Spirit.

Then Jesus makes his point to the one who was laying at his feet, **“Stand up. Take up your mat and go to your home!” Mark 2:11.** Others in the crowd believe that the man who was paralyzed suffered an affliction and bore no fault for his condition.

The witnesses to this healing marvel at what Jesus can do. All are amazed, giving credit to the intervention of Creator and Great Spirit. The persistent friends of faith are over the moon. As you can imagine, the man who was paralyzed experiences incredible joy as his muscles, joints, and limbs work to carry him home straightaway to his family. Can you imagine what each of the members of the man’s family experienced upon his arrival home?

Reread Mark 2:1-12. What is God saying to us in this passage?

At the end of December 2020, Governor General Juliette Payette announced the list of those who will receive the Order of Canada in recognition to their imaginative contribution to the life and well-being of the nation. Kegedonce John Borrows will be honoured for his role in promoting the importance of Indigenous knowledge and law in redefining relationships between Indigenous Peoples and Settler Canadians. As an academic, Dr. Borrows has published 20 books and contributed a number of articles for other editors identifying the need to think differently about law from an Indigenous framework. He

teaches in the Faculty of Law at the University of Victoria in British Columbia where he holds the Canadian Research Chair in Indigenous Law. The Supreme Court of Canada has cited him in a number of decisions impacting the rejuvenation of the history and interpretation of ongoing treaty relationships. As a member of the Chippewas of the Nawash First Nation, John Borrows grew up near Cape Crocker on a farm on the unceded traditional territories of his People. His mother left the reserve in order to avoid attending residential school but educated her son in the knowledge of Anishinaabe Laws and stories of their People. An uncle served as Chief in the past. A great-grandfather served on the Council for many years. A great-great-grandfather was a signatory of a treaty with the Crown. When Dr. Borrows was part of the Faculty of Law at the University of British Columbia, he was part of a group who established an Indigenous People's legal clinic in Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. Dr. Borrows assisted Nunavut to develop a legal infrastructure applying Indigenous principles in the application of law. Dr. Borrows has also taught in Australia and New Zealand, connecting with Indigenous knowledge keepers, professors, and students. Along with a colleague, Dr. Borrows created a joint Canadian common law and Indigenous law degree so that the University of Victoria became the first university to integrate both approaches to legal history, knowledge, and practice.

In my Reflections over the previous summer, I introduced you to Dr. Borrows and Dr. Michael Coyne as editors of *THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP: REIMAGINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORICAL TREATIES* (University of Toronto Press, 2017). Dr. Borrows reviewed the principles of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of 1764 between the Crown and over 2,000 Indigenous People representing 22 First Nations gathered at Niagara. Peace, friendship, and respect characterized the foundation of an ongoing relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples. Drs. Borrows and Coyne along with other authors of articles identified treaty relationships as partnerships between Settlers travelling in ships and Indigenous Peoples paddling in canoes in parallel moving forward in time. Both Settlers and Indigenous Peoples share the land, waters, and resources provided by Creator as well as a common commitment to ensure that the land, waters, and resources would be available to generations in the future. In the coming months, I will introduce the book by Dr. Borrows *LAW'S INDIGENOUS ETHICS* (University of Toronto Press, 2019) with its stories about how the Seven Grandfather/Grandmother Teachings give shape to Anishinaabe laws as well as more teachings from other Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.

Like the friends of the man who was a paralytic, Dr. Borrows continues to have faith that both Settlers and Indigenous Peoples will move forward to transform the criminal justice system as well as to find creative ways to resolve past and current issues in our common treaty relationships.

Reread Mark 2:1-12. What is God asking us to be and do?

Celebrate with the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (Neyaashiingmiing) the creative leadership of Kegdonce John Borrows in rejuvenating relationships between non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Peoples from coast to coast to coast on Turtle Island. Find ways to walk with our Indigenous neighbours, sharing in a common spiritual journey and thanking Creator, the Anointed One, and Great Spirit for all of the gifts which sustain us day by day. Pray for those who continue to experience pain, loss, and confusion from times when peace, friendship, and respect were set aside.

David Franks