

## Thursday in the Second Week after Epiphany: January 21, 2021

After Jesus takes the twelve men whom he had chosen up a mountain in Galilee, he comes down to continue healing and teaching beside the sea.

### Read Mark 4:21-34. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

The method which Jesus uses in Teaching is experiential, helping learners to think differently about ordinary circumstances in daily life. Jesus asks questions. Jesus describes scenarios for those who are listening to hear new sounds and for those who are looking to see more than meets the eye. For those with a more tactile learning style, members of the crowds feel more parts of the parables set out for them to explore.

Of course, no one lights a candle to place that source of illumination under a basket or a wash tub or under a bed. In the darkness, a candle on the table or on a mantel or in a sconce on the wall or in a chandelier hanging from the ceiling brings light for people to extend the daylight so that tasks can be completed and activities enjoyed among those in the room. Jesus speaks clearly, pointing out that between people who share these rooms, honesty and openness is needed. For those seeking good news and new life, light helps make sense of what happens between those who are close to us and opens us to new understandings of each other. **“Pay attention to what you hear! The measure that you give will be the measure that you get, and still more will be given to you!” Mark 4:24.** However, if you give nothing, your circumstances will get worse very quickly.

Jesus then speaks about what it means to be open to the presence of Creator and Great Spirit and acknowledge how the Source of All Life and Love works in the world. The Sower casts seed on the ground and waits for the warmth in the soil, the chemistry between the seeds and the soil, water from the skies, a multitude of small creatures living within the soil, sunlight, and some forms of soil and plant nutrients of course to interact. Science can help us to understand how this works but most of us are filled with awe when plants begin to sprout out of the soil and grow to maturity. Jesus points out the Sower becomes the Reaper, bringing in the harvest at the end of the growing cycle. Listeners to this parable are left pondering how Creator and Great Spirit works in the annual cycle of planting, tending crops, and harvesting as well as in the rhythms of our own lives. It is interesting that Jesus also challenges the crowds to consider Creator and Great Spirit to be present and active at both ends of life too, in birthing and in preparing for death to come at the end of life.

Jesus then speaks about what it means to be open to the presence of Creator and Great Spirit and how the Source of All Life and Love works in the world. The mustard seed in the Middle East begins as a small seed and can grow to be large, bushes, providing homes for the birds of the air and shade for all who need it. The pine seed is small lodged as one of many in a cone and yet can grow to be large enough to be the home of eagles. Both plants convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, renewing the air which we breathe.

Those who listened to these parables could ask questions in order to explore different perspectives on these ordinary events in their lives and discover much about Creator and Great Spirit as well as about themselves. Those closest to Jesus had more opportunities to ask questions and be given explanations to help them gain a more comprehensive understanding of his Teachings.

### Reread Mark 4:21-34. What is God saying to us?

In a seven module learning series **CULTIVATING A SACRED LIFE ROOTED IN HAUDENOSAUNEE TEACHING: APPLY INDIGENOUS WISDOM TO HOW YOU LIVE IN THE WORLD TODAY**, Kahontakwas Diane Longboat introduced participants to the spiritual understanding of Natural Laws among her People. From the Creation Story for her People, Kahontakwas understands that Human Beings were created last, after every other part of Creation came into being. Human Beings are the most vulnerable in all of Creation, dependent on every other part of Creation to help Human Beings to live and flourish. In this way, Natural Laws are the foundational key to the identity and purpose of every part of Creation. Creator provides a code for every part of Creation to follow. Every part of Creation also possesses instructions from Creator to help Human Beings to survive and flourish. In this framework, these instructions from Creator indicate a kind of knowledge which gives each part of creation a form of spiritual existence and purpose. Human Beings become surrounded by a multitude of Spiritual Beings belonging to every part of Creation with whom Human Beings can communicate and from whom Human Beings can learn much about how to live. In a very real sense, Indigenous Peoples understand themselves to be surrounded by Relatives who have been created by the Source of All Life and Love. Human Beings are taught how to live with these Relatives and respect what each of these Relatives does to contribute to the ongoing life of Creation, particularly for Human Beings. The spiritual life of Indigenous Peoples is filled to overflowing with complex sets of relationships with each part of Creation. Instead of seeking to dominate each part of Creation, Indigenous Peoples invest in developing their relationships with these Relatives. These Relatives become gifts from Creator who each do their part so that Human Beings can be nourished, survive, and live in both the spiritual sense and in physical ways.

With such an understanding of Natural Laws, Human Beings too are created in such a way as to find wholeness through giving thanks at the beginning of the day to Creator for each part of Creation as gifts as well as at the end of the day through giving thanks for Creator's gifts which we have received during that day and reviewing what we might want to change in our interactions or behaviours. Creator is generous, giving Human Beings all that we need to live and flourish. Creator also provides each one of us with gifts, knowledge, and skills for the well-being of not only those who are close to us but to the whole of humanity. In being aware of these gifts, knowledge, and skills, Human Beings come to understand our own spiritual purpose in Creation. Parents, Aunts and Uncles, Grandparents, Elders play special roles in identifying and affirming the gifts, knowledge, and skills that make a Human Being unique. Dreams and Vision Quests also enrich each Human Being's understanding of their spiritual purpose. Among Indigenous Peoples, Talking Circles are one of the ways to learn how to speak about what we are learning about ourselves and how to listen deeply to what others are learning too. After Teaching, Kahontakwas answered questions from participants and provided questions for further learning to happen in break-out groups of four or five participants. We were given instructions about the protocols for Talking Circles each participant learned to listen to find out what others were learning and developed ways to tell the stories about what we were learning too. Sometimes, it takes some discipline to listen to another person struggle to understand the light which they have been given.

#### **Reread Mark 4:21-34. What is God calling us to be and do?**

Consider the ordinary events of life, different parts of Creation, and relationships with all of our various relatives, listening for what Creator and Great Spirit are saying to us. Strive to be generous as Creator and Great Spirit have been generous to us. Give affirmation to others who are seeking their gifts, knowledge, and skills which make them unique in Creation.

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