

Thursday in the Week after Epiphany: January 7, 2021

In the gospel of John, we are introduced to the Eternal Word sent by Creator into the world to bring light out of darkness to the peoples of the world and to communicate to each and every human being about the character and intentions of Creator. Then, we are introduced to John the Baptizer who is also sent by Creator to prepare the way for the Eternal Word as foretold by the prophets of the Hebrew People. A young man comes to the River Jordan to be baptized in those moving waters by John the Baptizer and by Great Spirit present at the time of creation who descends from the heavens like a dove. This young man is named “the Lamb of God” and identified as “Teacher” by John the Baptizer. Once baptized, this young man begins to gather people together.

Read John 2:1-11. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

In the gospel of John, at the beginning of his unique ministry, Jesus attends a wedding in a small Galilean town. Jesus brings his new followers to Cana and meets his mother there. So many others also attend this celebration of new life. There is no shortage of food for the crowds. However, the wine runs out so Mary points out to her son that the families hosting this celebration face a serious dilemma. Jesus hears an unspoken expectation in his mother’s indirect communication. Mary knows that her son is unique in creation and has authority to make amazing events happen so she tells the servants to listen to what Jesus will tell them and do whatever he says. Jesus tells the servants to fill six huge clay jars with safe, clean water so they follow his directions. These six huge clay jars have been set aside for waters to be blessed and used to cleanse those gathered so they can be acceptable to the Lord God Almighty who has freed the Hebrew People from slavery and given them a Promised Land upon which to raise their children’s children for generations to come. Jesus seizes the moment. The Steward of the Wedding Feast is amazed and calls to the bridegroom, saying, “**Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have had their fill. But you have kept the good wine until now!**” **John 2:10.** Not only is the water turned into wine much better in quality but there is so much more of this better wine. New clay jars will need to be found for safe, clean water to cleanse those gathered in Cana so they can give thanks to Creator and Great Spirit and worship. Jesus is full of surprises and provides the means to celebrate new life coming into being. Jesus also changes the means by which people can connect with the Source of All Life and Love.

Reread John 2:1-11. What is God saying to us in this passage?

In the gospel of John, Jesus humbles himself to journey on the path prepared for him. Then, Jesus gathers others to him. Then, Jesus shows all of the people gathered in a small town a powerful sign of his unique ministry and the generosity of Creator and Great Spirit. Jesus has authority like no other and uses this authority to communicate to everyone a new way of looking at what happens in everyday life and of listening to what Creator and Great Spirit says in these circumstances.

In November 2020, I began the first of seven teaching modules on the ZOOM platform with Elder Kahontakwas Diane Longboat from Six Nations. As part of her spiritual journey, Kahontakwas founded the Soul of the Mother Lodge, maintaining a sacred fire and drawing others to share what they have

learned on their respective spiritual journeys. Through conversations, talking circles, and ceremonies, Kahontakwas continues to nourish others and to grow in the Sacred Life rooted in Haudenosaunee Teachings. Through an abbreviated Thanksgiving Address, participants are introduced into spiritual practices in connecting with Creator and Great Spirit through giving thanks for the many ways in which all Peoples are nourished through the elements of this creation, plants, animals, fish in the oceans, the waters of Mother Earth, the waters which surrounded us in our own mother's womb, the waters within each living creature, the waters in the air, the winds, the stars, Grandmother Moon, and Grandfather Sun. Kahontakwas advised the 191 participants to begin the practice of giving thanks at the rise of the sun and praying for those in need as well as at the end of the day in reviewing what happened and making an inventory of what we would like to do differently. A module facilitated an exploration of our dreams as a means through which Creator and Great Spirit communicate visions to guide our lives. The benefits in developing a relationship with a spiritual mentor were covered, acknowledging the role Elders and skilled people play in the life of communities. In developing new relationships with creation, participants were challenged to join with anyone on Mother Earth who sought to ensure that the resources of creation would be available to generations to come. Kahontakwas prepared participants to recognize the spirits which Creator and Great Spirit placed within the materials of creation and every living being among creatures for the benefit of humankind. Those with Indigenous heritage were asked to prepare medicines such as tobacco, sage, sweetgrass, and cedar to offer to Creator, to acknowledge a particular tree in the natural order, to prepare plates of food for Mother Earth and Grandfather Sun, and to bring water to leave at the base of the tree. Participants were asked to formulate a question to ask the tree, to physically connect with the tree, and to wait for an answer to our question. Non-Indigenous participants of faith were asked to consider which aspects of this ceremony would generate the same appreciation for the tree as a gift from Creator and Great Spirit, to formulate a question for the tree, to ask the question, and to wait for an answer. It was amazing to hear the experiences shared by various participants during the module on this past Monday.

Unfortunately, I suffered a minor injury pulling a muscle while shovelling snow in early December 2020. When 14 boxes of hardwood flooring arrived, these materials needed to be brought into our home and allowed to warm. Over 8 days, much needed to be done. Furniture was moved. Carpets were taken up and rolled into strips. Measurements were made so the lines in the hardwood from the upper hallway would follow through into the master bedroom and closet, accommodating for 22 planks from the adjoining wall in our semi-detached home. Everything lined up. However, I am not as young as I was when laying various hardwood floors over the years. I am still recovering some three weeks after completing this project. As a result, I have taken a short break from my sunrise devotions and plan to find a particular tree in the coming month, acknowledge this gift, posing my question, and waiting for a response from Creator and Great Spirit.

If I get an answer from this tree, my daughter the Clinical Psychologist and my wife the former Social Worker have informed me that they will make a referral for me. I am curious to learn what Creator, Eternal Word, and Great Spirit will say. I am sure that Anyone who can turn a large quantity of safe, clean water into excellent wine for a Wedding Feast can communicate an answer to my question in a variety of creative ways.

Reread John 2:1-11. What is God calling us to be and do?

Learn from others about how they connect with Creator, Eternal Word, and Great Spirit and engage in thoughtful communication. If you want to know about something that puzzles you or something that blocks your movement forward or takes away from experiencing the peace that passes all understanding, formulate that question, ask that question, and wait for an answer. Find people to share what you learn.

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