

Thursday in the Third Week after Pentecost: June 17, 2021

After riding into Jerusalem on a young donkey and having some of the crowds throw their cloaks on the ground or strew palm branches before him, Jesus makes public that he sees what will happen to the city in the future. Jerusalem will be destroyed. Inhabitants will be killed or seek safety beyond the city gates. Not one stone along the stout walls surrounding the city will be left on top of each other.

Jesus also enters the Temple and in anger, he clears the precincts of the thieves who extort the poor who seek to connect with the Lord God Almighty. Afterwards, Jesus teaches the poor and the faithful about the good news of the generosity and affection of the Source of All Life and Love.

It is not surprising that Jesus faces challenges from the chief priests, legal experts, and representatives from various religious bodies with authority in the capital city Jerusalem.

Read Luke 20:41-21:4. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?

Jesus poses two closely related questions for all in the crowds to hear, ***“Why do they say that the Christ is David’s son? David himself says in the scroll of the Psalms, the Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right side until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!’ Since David calls him ‘Lord!’, how can he be David’s son?”*** Luke 20:41-43. Some in the crowds are filled with awe and wonder, puzzling over what Jesus is meaning. Others in the crowds become incensed and want to do Jesus serious harm.

Jesus makes a claim that the Source of All Life and Love uniquely contributed to his conception, giving Jesus authority to enter Jerusalem as the much longed for Messiah and to clear the Temple of those who would not repent and change their exploitative ways.

Jesus then challenges the ones in the crowd who are filled with awe and wonder to develop their capacity for critical thinking and to exercise the gift of emotional discernment. Jesus gives people who have eyes to see and ears to hear some clues about being able to identify those who are dangerous to their health and well-being. Jesus possesses the ability to identify those who seek to establish and keep their authority in the community no matter what the cost. Jesus points out that those who seek to establish and keep their power and wealth wear clothing to impress others and flourish with the approval of others in the marketplace. Jesus connects these behaviours with an all consuming drive to use their religious authority in public worship to puff themselves up and get away with their exploitation of the most vulnerable in the community. Jesus raises up the poor widow and turns the spotlight on her as the person to emulate. Jesus teaches that her sacrificial gift of a couple of coins of little financial worth are more valued by the Source of All Life and Love than the donations made by the wealthy which are chump change in comparison.

Reread Luke: 20:41-21:4. What is God saying to us?

When the Truth and Reconciliation Committee journeyed from coast to coast to coast gathering survivors of residential schools and listening to what these Indigenous people had to say about their experiences, stories were shared about children and youth who did not survive and were not returned to their families and communities. By the time that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission published their Final Report in 2015, it was clear that the federal government and churches who operated these

residential schools had not recorded the names of all of the children and youth who had died and did not return to their homes. Although many non-Indigenous Canadians were surprised by the discovery of unmarked graves for 215 children at Kamloops Indian Residential School, none of the members of Indigenous Peoples were not surprised.

This discovery stirred up intense feelings of sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, numbness, and anger in Indigenous people. Old wounds were re-opened. Elders, Healers, Knowledge Keepers, Grandmothers, Grandfathers, Mental Health Workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, teachers, clergy, and counsellors provided various forms of support. A national Indian Residential School Crisis Line was put in place and advertised to provide supports. Indigenous people became creative in setting up memorial sites. Images of children's shoes, toys, flowers, cards, and other mementos honoured these children and youth, finding their way into the media. Indigenous people living near other residential schools wondered about the presence of other children and youth buried on the grounds, particularly near Brandon, Manitoba and Fredericton, New Brunswick. Medicines such as sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, and cedar as well as strawberries were evident according to the spiritual practices of some Indigenous Peoples. Ceremonies with Drummers, Singers, and Dancers were held in so many places, facilitating connections with Creator/Great Spirit as well as with compassionate Human Beings.

Non-Indigenous people communicated emotional and spiritual support through friendships as well as at vigils, walks, and ceremonies, validating the experiences and feelings as allies in a common journey towards reconciliation. Church bells were rung, honouring the 215 children and youth. Indigenous communities were upheld in private prayers and public worship. Speakers and preachers acknowledged the travesty of a complicated history in the operation of residential schools and the support of policies of assimilation and cultural genocide. Pastoral letters from religious leaders were published and shared with worshipping communities. Politicians at every level of government spoke of the need to dismantle systems upholding racism directed towards Indigenous Peoples and made commitments to address longstanding inequities which continue to impact Indigenous children and youth in this generation. Federal politicians passed a motion to withdraw from legal proceedings to compensate children and youth who were removed from the care of their parents and placed in foster care or put up for adoption with non-Indigenous caregivers as well as to restrict the application of Jordan's Principle in circumstances when medical services were impeded by federal and provincial disputes about which government needed to pick up the cost of these services and supports to be provided in Indigenous communities. Promises were made to make funding available to identify, investigate, and commemorate residential school burial sites, guided by Indigenous leadership. It is important to know what happened here in Canada and to take action to continue moving towards changing history.

Reread Luke 20:41-21:4. What is God calling us to be and do?

Pray for Indigenous people and communities who continue to be impacted by the loss of children and youth who did not return from residential schools. Pray for non-Indigenous people who have not been able to acknowledge the history of harm inflicted on Indigenous children and youth in the past and current ways preventing them from achieving their full potential as Human Beings. Be creative and intentional in communicating your support to make changes to give Indigenous children and youth hope for the future.

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