

## **Thursday after Trinity Sunday: June 3, 2021**

Among the crowds who come to listen to Jesus teach and watch him heal the afflicted, those who are religious leaders possessing both power and wealth begin to challenge Jesus. In response, Jesus tells parables and provides brief summaries of these stories. Jesus also heals those in great anguish as object lessons. Jesus seeks to facilitate an understanding about the application of what one learns from these nuggets of wisdom for everyday living in relationship with Creator and Great Spirit.

### **Read Luke 18:1-8. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?**

Jesus teaches with humour. It is not easy for the vulnerable to obtain justice for how others take advantage of their losses and exploit them. The subject of this parable is a woman whose husband has died so she no longer benefits from his protection in a patriarchal culture. This widow is being exploited by some male in her community who preys on her circumstances and exercises his power to gain from the limited resources which she presently holds. In this parable, this perpetrator is not given a name so he remains invisible as part of the background in this teaching. The other character in this parable is a Judge who has been given the responsibility by this patriarchal community to demonstrate respect to the Source of All Life and Love as well as to the Human Beings in his jurisdiction. However, this character states clearly that he has neither respect for Creator and Great Spirit nor for all of the Human Beings in this community. Those who listen to Jesus speak and watch what he does know that this parable depicts what is commonly known and understood about how the world works. It is not too difficult for ordinary people to identify gender inequalities and racism in the social, economic, and political ways in which Human Beings organize ourselves. It is easy for Jesus to portray the justice system as corrupt, favouring those who already possess property, wealth, and power and disadvantaging those without property, financial resources, and the means to obtain what is needed to survive.

Jesus also introduces another character into this parable for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. Jesus contrasts the self-absorbed Judge with the Source of All Life and Love. In this patriarchal community, the Judge does not care for the vulnerable. This Judge does not seek to make decisions based on equality between Human Beings but on a rule of law which favours males who have property, wealth, and power in obtaining resources for themselves and their descendants to survive. This Judge also does not care about the health and well-being of other non-human beings in creation. It is humorous to learn that the guiding principle for the Judge to make a decision is very simple: the Judge does not want to face a persistent woman whose husband has died and be embarrassed by her efforts to bring her circumstances before the court and the community. Jesus knows that the Source of All Life and Love operates under completely different guiding principles. Out of abundance, the Source of All Life and Love gives what is necessary for all Human Beings to survive. The focus of the Source of All Life and Love is not on punishing the man in the community who seeks to exploit the widow nor the corrupt Judge who perpetuates the inequalities in this patriarchal community but on the need to ensure that the most vulnerable Human Beings have their basic needs met and a future for themselves and their descendants. Like the Source of All Life and Love, Jesus encourages the faithful to be persistent in prayer and unwavering in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and around the world.

### **Reread Luke 18:1-8. What is God saying to us?**

During a learning event, an Anishinaabe Grandmother was listened to a church-going participant state: “...the Indigenous community should not rip us off of our identity with Christ because we want to accommodate them!” and was troubled by this statement.

For Indigenous Sunday at Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora in 2019, Canon Andrew Wesley recounted how his father took him as a young child to meet the Elders among the Moose Cree around the tip of James Bay and to listen to their teachings. Canon Andrew Wesley learned that before the Missionaries arrived, his Indigenous People spoke their language and practiced their cultural teachings which connected each member to Great Spirit *Gitche Manitou* and provided knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual practices to connect with each other. Canon Andrew Wesley also explained that when the Missionaries arrived and translated the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Common Praise into Cree syllabics, his people received portions of the Bible assigned for weekly worship and English hymns to sing in their own language. The Missionaries also brought residential schools which penalized children and youth from speaking to each other in their own language and from learning their spiritual practices of their culture from their Elders. As a residential school survivor, Canon Andrew Wesley pointed out that he did not deserve the punishments which he suffered nor the educational structure which destroyed family relationships.

In the Anglican Church of Canada podcast **SACRED TEACHINGS: Season 3, Episode 5 MY CANOE**, Canon Norm Wesley from Moose Cree First Nation recounts the teachings which he received from his father about the construction, care, and use of a canoe and how he applies this teaching in order to survive in two worlds. The first world originates from the language, knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual practices of his Indigenous People which he learned from Elders as well as each of his parents. The second world is the English-speaking universe of the dominant culture in Canada in which he lives and navigates daily. Canon Norm Wesley concludes that he has learned to paddle two canoes with proficiency.

In an article **NOT SPIRITUALITY: NATIVE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY** in **QUEST FOR RESPECT: The Church and Indigenous Spirituality (INTOTEMAK: Mennonite Church Canada, Spring 2017)**, the former Episcopal Bishop of Alaska and member of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Stephen Charleston and a Professor at Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University Elaine Robinson maintain that Indigenous spiritualities give shape and content to a unique Christian theology. Bishop Charleston and Dr. Robinson point out that many Settlers and Newcomers seek a spirituality which gives them freedom to select teachings and spiritual practices which connect them to Creator or Great Spirit without having to become part of organized religion and specific forms of worship but express concern that the incorporation of Indigenous spiritual practices become another way of stereotyping, appropriating, and demeaning Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and cultural practices. Bishop Charleston and Dr. Robinson argue that the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island can be honoured by an understanding that Indigenous Peoples are living in original covenant relationships with Creator/Great Spirit much like the Hebrew People lived in a covenant relationship with Creator and Great Spirit as known through the Hebrew Scriptures. Indigenous theology provides two precious gifts to Christian theology through teachings, ceremonies, cultural wisdom, and spiritual practices. The first gift apparent to Bishop Charleston and Dr.

Robinson is that reality and faith is communal not individualistic. Each member discovers their strengths and offers these gifts to others within their community. The second gift is that reality and faith is based on experiences of the mystery, generosity, and loving intentions of Creator/Great Spirit known through having all of our needs met through the abundance of this good creation as our Ancestors before us have been met and our descendants who come after us will be met. Through the journey of life, each member benefits from the presence of many teachers since each part of creation is considered to exist as a spiritual being and to have been given directions by Creator/Great Spirit to help Human Beings to survive over thousands of years. Each member is supported and supports others to live in right relationship with all spiritual beings, including other Human Beings.

In his book **ONE DRUM: Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet (Douglas and Macintyre Ltd, Madeira Park, British Columbia, 2019)**, Richard Wagamese points out that Indigenous Peoples accept each other's stories, ceremonies, and spiritual practices as being different but of equal worth. What Indigenous Peoples hold in common is that each of their members learns over the years to turn the embers of the sacred fire within each of themselves into a fire which connects them to the sacred fire at the centre of Mother Earth and the fires burning in each of the stars in the night sky. No matter what happens on the journey of life, each Human Being connects the energy within themselves to the energy present in the unfolding universe. This energy illustrates the ongoing presence of Creator/Great Spirit in our lives, on this planet, and in this universe. Richard Wagamese was a member of Wabaseemoong Independent Nations in northwestern Ontario and died in March 2017.

In my own experiences in relationships with members who belong to a variety of Indigenous Peoples, I am not asked to surrender any of my Christian beliefs or practices. In healthy relationships, each person ensures the safety of the other person or people and contributes to the well-being of the development of that relationship. As a result, I have examined what has caused harm in the past to those relationships so I have discovered what I need to change in my thinking and behaviours so these relationships can develop. For me, this is not an accommodation but part of an ongoing transformation. My understanding of Christian life and beliefs has changed as a result of listening to the experiences of those Indigenous people whom I have met and watching them discover what Creator/Great Spirit is moving them forward to be and do. My relationships with members of a variety of Indigenous Peoples continue to enrich my own journey in life.

#### **Reread Luke 18:1-8. What is God asking you and I to be and do?**

Pray consistently and never stop praying, particularly for residential school survivors as well as for families whose children and youth died while attending the Tk'emlups Residential School in Kamloops, British Columbia. Listen to the stories which Indigenous Peoples tell of their experiences. Watch for the respect and gratitude which Indigenous Peoples show towards the spirit keepers whom they have met on their own journey of life. Be open to making changes in your own beliefs and spiritual practices so that you may rejoice in the blessings found in the presence and ongoing work of Creator, Eternal Word, and Great Spirit.

Celebrate the life and work of the Reverend Canon Ginny Doctor through the ZOOM event **RETURNING HOME WITH SONGS OF JOY GOSPEL JAM: A TRIBUTE TO GINNY DOCTOR** on June 12, 2021 from 9 to 11 pm EDT. Canon Ginny Doctor served many years in the Diocese of Alaska before coming to share her knowledge and gifts at our national church Indigenous Ministries where she provided leadership in the development of DOCTRINE OF DISCOVER: STOLEN LANDS AND STRONG HEARTS as well as six seasons of the podcasts SACRED TEACHINGS. Canon Ginny Doctor died unexpectedly on the traditional territories of Six Nations. The Primate Linda Nicholls and the National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald made her death known on May 27, 2021 and invited people to pray for her family and friends. Watch for Indigenous Ministries Anglican Church of Canada to publish the ZOOM link for this Gospel Jamboree.