

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT: March 4, 2021

In Cana of Galilee, Jesus heals the young son of a royal official without laying hands on this child.

In Jerusalem, outside the Sheep Gate at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus heals a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years and did not have anyone to lift him into the pool when the waters moved in mysterious ways to bring healing to the afflicted at particular times. The religious authorities objected since Jesus healed the man on a Sabbath day and began to search for ways to harm Jesus.

Read John 5:19-29. What catches my attention in this gospel passage?

Jesus challenges the religious and political leaders who plan to do him harm. Jesus points out that Creator and Great Spirit are generous, healing the afflicted on any day of the week. Jesus speaks plainly about the intentions of the Source of All Life and Love. Human Beings can and will be made whole to experience life and love in all its mystery and glory.

Jesus also speaks to the religious and political leaders with clarity about the source of his own authority. Jesus claims that Creator and Great Spirit sent him into the world to offer each and every Human Being opportunities to become new creatures as part of a new and everlasting creation. Jesus identifies the Lord God Almighty to be his Father and himself to be his Father's only Son. Jesus states that he has limitations as the Son of God. Jesus can only be and do what his Father shows him to be and do. Jesus teaches, **"Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead, so too the Son gives life to whomever he wishes."**

John 5:21. This message is very challenging for those in positions of religious and political power. Contrary to the stories which had been circulating among the Hebrew People for a number of generations, the Lord God Almighty no longer held the task of separating the Righteous from the Unrighteous on a final Day of Judgement but had given Jesus that task as an equal. Jesus claims the authority given to him, teaching **"Do not be astonished at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out---those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."** John 5:29. Jesus can do nothing more than what the Source of Life and Love can do, raising the dead and creating life.

These are bold teachings for Jesus to communicate to everyone who can hear what he has to say and see how he lives this message. On the path in this creation, a person takes a giant step by opening themselves to what Jesus teaches and living by this light. Such a person turns from the world of the dead to walk in the world of the living, belonging to Peoples who choose life on a daily basis on each step on Mother Earth.

Reread John 5:19-29. What is God saying to us?

In a chapter entitled "The Honorable Harvest" in her book **BRAIDING SWEETGRASS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS (Milkwood Editions, 2013)**, Robin Wall Kimmerer takes her basket and goes out onto the land to find wild leeks during the early days of rain-soaked April. Dr. Kimmerer follows the cawing of the crows over a field of the remnants of corn stalks propped up by their exposed roots which look like exposed spider legs. Exposed rocks bear the

scrapes of ploughs. Years of herbicides and the continuous planting of corn every year left this field sterile. Although the earth is wet, blades of grasses are nowhere to be seen. By August, this field will be a monoculture of corn plants set out in neat rows. Rows of stones mark the edges of this field. On the other side, the soil is soft underfoot and deep in centuries of leaf mould. Dr. Kimmerer sets out across the humus of the forest floor. As is her spiritual practice as a Citizen of the Potawatomi Nation in Oklahoma, she introduces herself and greets each of the species of flowers and plants arising through the brown mat of leaves at her feet, as she has done over the years. She explains why she has come and asks permission to harvest, asking politely if these plants were willing to share their lives with her and her family. For Dr. Kimmerer and her daughters who are coming home from post-secondary schools, eating leeks is a spring tonic, more like a medicine than a food. Dr. Kimmerer seeks to connect her daughters with the land where they have been raised. In the second clump of leeks, some of the leaves have expanded while others are still rolled in spears. However, when she digs with her trowel, pulls up a root, and shakes off the dark earth, she finds ragged, papery sheathes where a clump of fat, white bulbs should be. As the woman with a basket who needed to fill it, she pondered the question posed by her Ancestors: "How do you consume in a way that does justice to the lives that we take?" Dr. Kimmerer listened to the answer which the clump of leeks had given her so she returned the withered bulb back into the ground from where she had taken this medicine and food for herself and her daughters.

A few weeks later, Dr. Kimmerer returned with her basket. The growth of leaves had taken the nutrients out of the bulbs at the root of the plant in the soil. When she asked a second time if the clump of leeks were willing to share their lives with her, the leaves unfurled and grown taller, becoming a solar array to replenish the bulbs at the root of the plant, playing out a reciprocity in relationship between the two parts of the same plant. With her trowel, she discovered that the strong scent of the leeks had attracted some deer which bruised the plants and that the bulbs were more than twice the size as she had originally encountered. Dr. Kimmerer noted: "Asking permission shows respect for the personhood of the plant but is also an assessment of the well-being of the population." In using the left side of her brain, Dr. Kimmerer took readings of the empirical signs which indicated that the population was large and healthy enough to harvest. In using the right intuitive side of her brain, Dr. Kimmerer took readings about the generosity of the plant and a sense of openness, communicating the message 'Take Me!' or a reluctant response, communicating a tight-lipped response "Please Leave Me." Both sides of her brain representing different kinds of knowledge provide an answer about whether or not to use her trowel and put enough in her basket for the needs at hand. By harvesting at the centre of the clump of leeks, more growth among the bulbs in the clump was stimulated.

Traditional teachings by Elders and Knowledge Keepers provide many prescriptions for sustainability. Knowledge, stories, and practices help to restore a balance between the need to harvest so a People can live and the need to ensure sustainable resources for future generations.

Reread John 5:19-29. What is God calling us to be and do?

Jesus teaches that the Source of All Life continues to create new life in a generous and caring manner. In the Johannine gospel, Jesus claims to be engaged in the same ongoing work with the same caring intention. For those of us raised with the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, we open

ourselves to a life in which we are given many opportunities to choose and experience a liberation from the tyranny of evil so that we can walk forward into the future. We celebrate glimpses of a fullness of life which is beyond our understanding and sounds of voices which tell us that we are beloved beyond all that we can ask or imagine. With this spiritual framework, we do not rejoice when some maintain their positions of power over other Human Beings and the gifts of this Creation, seeking to do harm at any cost. With this spiritual framework, we can seek Human Beings in various places on Mother Earth who honour and seek wisdom in caring for this fragile planet and the Peoples who rely on gifts provided for survival now and in the generations to come.