

Nobody from Nowhere

4 July 2021 - Pentecost 6

The gospel this week picks up where last week's gospel left off. Last week Jesus healed the Woman with Hemorrhages and Jairus' daughter. Two distinctly different healings happening in two distinctly separate places.

This week Jesus is heading "home" to Nazareth. He's had a relatively good week, traveling with a few of his disciples, here and there, setting out to take up his heavenly father's business - you know, son of God stuff? Up until recently Jesus has been learning from his earthly father, Joseph, the carpenter.

Come the Sabbath, Jesus goes to the Temple or Synagogue and the folks who hear him are gobsmacked. "They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!' which, to me, sounds as though they are a bit awe-struck. However, that sentiment does not last..." "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him." (Mark 6.3, NRSV)

In other words, the busy bodies are incredulous...

Person 1 - "this guy is quite smart...he sounds like he knows what he's talking about."

Person 2 - "this kid? Isn't he Joseph and Mary's kid? Isn't he a carpenter?"

Person 3 - "You're right! How could HE, the kid of a carpenter, know all this God stuff?"

And so, with a verbal shrug, Jesus leaves town, stopping to heal a few folks along the way. He's not making a big deal of anything he's doing, and yet "he was amazed at their unbelief." (Mark 6.6, NRSV) I cannot imagine what it was Jesus was feeling. Being a carpenter was good, honest, essential work.

Joseph was well-respected in the community, as was Mary, and yet, the scoffers in the synagogue would not give Jesus the credit he deserved, for knowing what he was talking about."

When I left my home church in Cambridge, Ontario to attend Seminary, all the children became suspended at the age they were when I left. One of my favourite littles, Charlotte, was a little girl who LOVED Church. Two summers ago, I saw a photograph of her graduating from high school. I was stunned. "How is this possible?" I thought. "She was only a little girl when I left and that was only 5, no 10, no, 15 years ago. GOOD GRIEF! She's not a little girl any more!

I wonder if maybe, some of Jesus' detractors were feeling this?

Regardless, Jesus leaves Nazareth feeling dismayed and likely a bit disappointed. He then goes to the neighbouring villages and takes the twelve with him. He's teaching them what they are to do as they begin their ministry. He's sending them out two by two with instructions on how to behave. And then he tells them the most inexplicable part..."He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics." (Mark 6.8-9, NRSV)

Um, excuse me? No bread, no bag, no money, only one tunic, a walking staff, sandals on their feet and faith in their heart. Hold on a minute. Wait just a second here. He's sending them out to depend entirely on the kindness of strangers...what kind of craziness is this?

I tell you right now, if Jesus wanted me to go out with no google map or map book, no reservations or phone calls made in advance of the visit, no suitcase or at least a change of clothes, I'd be mighty uncomfortable and feel incredibly unprepared. That is not how I do things. You should see the lists I have for my upcoming days off, never mind the lists for my vacation...EGADS.

But here's the thing. Jesus knew that it was the Jewish custom to extend hospitality to strangers. If a stranger knocked on your door, you would welcome them in, offer them food and drink as well as a place to stay and you would care for them as you would your own family.

Jesus knows his disciples will be well cared for. And if they should, by some unfortunate twist of fate, not be welcomed, they are instructed to “shake off the dust that is on your feet”. (Mark 6.11, NRSV)

In other words, do not stay where you are not wanted. Don't go where you are tolerated, seek the places you are celebrated!

Except it's not always that easy.

On Thursday I was invited to participate in the Reconciliation Walk with our Ktunaxa siblings from Tobacco Plains. I wore a clergy shirt under an orange t-shirt and did notice a few sideways looks from people. It was important for me to be there, showing support as well as representing the Church.

My forefathers made some horrendous choices, and did some horrendous things that can never be undone. Yet it is up to me to walk the path of reconciliation, with my Indigenous siblings, not with shame, but with hope.

The announcement on Wednesday of the 182 unmarked shallow graves at the St. Eugene Mission School nearly broke me. I had intended to drive to Cranbrook on Thursday after the walk was finished, but when I got home to change and have a cold drink, I made the mistake of sitting down. I could not find the strength to stand up again. I could not make that drive.

Instead, I watched “We Were Children” a documentary made by the National Film Board that takes a look at two residential school survivors; the atrocities they suffered and how their lives were irreparably changed. If you have an opportunity to watch it, I encourage you to do so.

I do plan to drive to St. Eugene's this afternoon to sit on the grounds and pray. It is my belief that these remains are not forgotten by the Creator. They have been protected and comforted in death, in ways they were not in life. I fully anticipate the next few months will be a trying time in the lives of Indigenous Communities where these remains are found.

We must be prepared to hear the stories over and over again. Senator Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission stated that he felt

there would likely be about 6,000 remains found. If that number is accurate, and I have every reason to expect it will be, we have only just begun to uncover the tip of the iceberg.

What can we do?

We can educate ourselves.

We can pray for our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

We can read the Recommendations of the TRC.

We can read the Articles of UNDRIP.

In the fall, once we are settled back into some semblance of "normal" in our buildings, we will have a study on sections of the TRC recommendations and the UNDRIP Articles. To see what it is, that we can put into action in our lives, our communities and our Parish.

And if you think you can't do any of this because you may not be well known in this community - I remind you to think of Jesus. The nobody from nowhere who taught his disciples how to graciously receive hospitality while they went about their ministry of teaching, preaching, healing and proclaiming.

We have been called, every one of us, to find a way to reconciliation. And we can do it, if we choose to. We may not always get the words right, or know exactly what we are to do, but we have the greatest ally and asset at our disposal. The teachings of our brother Jesus the Christ.

Reconciliation is within each and every one of us. Let it be within you. To share, to learn and to grow.

Amen

Mark 6.1-13

The Reverend Andrea L. Brennan, Incumbent
Elk Valley Ecumenical Shared Ministry
Knox United Church & Christ Church Anglican
Fernie, B.C.