

Homily  
17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022  
The Reverend Victoria Scott  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa

[Readings: LAMENTATIONS 1:1-6; LAMENTATIONS 3:19-26 AS CANTICLE; 2  
TIMOTHY 1:1-14; LUKE 17:5-10](#)

“And”. I’m going to suggest to you that “and” is one of the most important words we have as human beings.

I’m reading a book called “Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole” – my thanks to Linda P. for pointing me to it. The author, Susan Cain, offers that a bittersweet perspective finds a place of wholeness in the dualities of life by acknowledging and finding ways to transcend the “ands” that are everywhere.

Our human existence takes us through a range of “ands”. Life *is* both bitter and sweet. There is both faith and doubt. Joy and sorrow. Praise and lament. There is celebration and conflict. Honour and humiliation. Integrity and infidelity. There is the ordinary and the extraordinary.

As we experience all of life, it is the word “and” that makes an important space for us in our humanity, and as Christians.

Society often has us seeking to solve or replace sorrow with joy, to praise so fully that there is no room for lament. That’s not how it works, though. It is always “and”. In acknowledging the “and” we are freed from the impossible task of eliminating sorrow, and it becomes about transforming and transcending that sorrow to find healing and wholeness in ourselves, and with each other. It becomes about moving between sorrow and joy, between lament and praise, in ourselves and with each other.

This morning, we make space to remember the children who went to Indian Residential Schools - those who survived, and the thousands who did not. Through prayer and action we will honour all the children and affirm that every child matters, every day.

As we walk a path toward truth and reconciliation in the country, we must continue to make space for sorrow and lament. We must continue to live into the “and” between settlers and Indigenous Peoples in a way that is rooted in love and respect. In a way that acknowledges and honours diversity and difference.

In 1993, Archbishop Michael Peers expressed remorse that the Anglican Church of Canada had tried to remake the Indigenous Peoples of this country in our own image. This acknowledged a failure to have seen God in the First Peoples of this country.

A second apology was made in 2019, and Archbishop Fred Hiltz, on behalf of our Church, confessed to spiritual arrogance, and a failure to acknowledge the relationship First Peoples had with the Creator.

These failures are rooted in the misconception that there is only one way – one path – to God. These failures come from eyes, hearts, and minds that reject difference and diversity that God has woven through the whole of creation instead of honouring it.

This is another way that “and” works in our humanity. “And” helps us to be in the midst of difference and diversity. We are both ourselves and an interconnected collective. We are each uniquely and wonderfully made, and we are inextricably linked in the great collective of creation.

Sometimes, in our humanity, the craving for certainty is strong. Sometimes we want to be reassured that our perspective is the right one, that our expression of faith is superior, that our way is the only way. This way – a way that is motivated by fear and judgement and disconnection – is not the Way of Jesus. The Way of Jesus invites us to see and feel an “and” between ourselves and God, and between ourselves and one another and all of creation. It invites us to live a life of radical love and acceptance that sees and honours the “ands” that are everywhere...

In our Gospel passage this morning the disciples say to Jesus “increase our faith”. It’s important to consider the verses just before these ones. Jesus instructs the disciples on forgiveness, on not causing others to stumble. It sounds to me like the disciples are overwhelmed with the task at hand. They are seeking to

eliminate the doubt they are feeling about what Jesus has asked of them with more faith. With “faith” that is in some mysterious place that requires reaching and stretching to find it. Jesus says to them that it’s not about seeking more, it’s about trusting in what is already there. God is there, in us, with us, loving us unconditionally, and faith is this connection – this “and” of “God and us”. We are all already connected, and faith is honouring those connections.

The next part of this morning’s Gospel passage is troubling with its example of slave and master. While we know that slavery was an accepted part of society at the time this story was first told, I can find no living word in glorifying or even accepting slavery. However, this morning’s Gospel verses do take us from the individual experience and inner life – the disciples search for increased faith – to the collective experience and the system and framework that were part of the disciple’s outer lives. Systems and frameworks are part of our outer lives and our collective experience. I wonder, if the living word for us, today, can be found in another “and”: inner and outer life. We’re called, as Christians, to be attentive to both. Our lives need to be rooted in the Gospel on the inside and the outside. We are attentive to the “and” of God and us, God loving us, on the inside so that we can let that show on the outside.

In a few minutes we will share in a ritual with the orange ribbons you received at the beginning of the service. There are more by our new prayer net if you didn’t get one at the beginning. May this outward gesture be a symbol of our inner lament as we remember the children who went to residential schools. May that lament propel us into right action as we live into the “and” between settlers and Indigenous Peoples in a way that is rooted in love and respect. In a way that acknowledges and honours diversity and difference.

So: “and”. It’s an important word, an important reminder. There are “ands” everywhere. It’s not either/or, but *and*. It’s the “ands” of lament and praise. Sorrow and joy. Ordinary and extraordinary. It’s the “ands” of diversity and difference. It’s the “ands” of inner and outer life.

It is “and” that makes community – all of you, and me – and community is essential: we need God, and we need one another. We need God with us as we move between joy and sorrow. We need one another as we move between praise and lament. This place – particularly on a Sunday morning – is a place where we

can meet one another and feel all the “ands”, together. It is a place where we tend to both our inner and our outer lives. May this time here this morning remind you that God is with you in all the “ands”. May it remind you that we are together in the “ands”. In Jesus name. Amen.