

Sermon  
National Indigenous Day of Prayer  
Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa  
The Reverend Victoria Scott

Readings: [Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalm 19; Philippians 4:4-9; John 1:1-18](#)

Author Anne Lamott says something it's easy to forget as we make our way through this life: she says that we are all too often comparing the insides of ourselves to the outside of others. She encourages us not to do that, reminding us that other people are much more like us on the inside than we would believe, but we can't make assumptions based on outside measures.

Remembering this gives us a different stance, a different posture as we make our way through this life. It encourages us to see beyond what appears to be going on immediately before us. It encourages us to trust that there is more than meets the eye in this life, in this world.

I think we're probably all familiar with the golden rule, often expressed as: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

The golden rule takes a sympathetic stance. It can be well meaning, but it makes some dangerous assumptions: that what is good for us is good for others. It also assumes superior knowledge of what is helpful or harmful for others. Anne Lamott also encourages us to remember that help can be the

“sunny side of control” and that we need to be careful with how we help others...

The platinum rule turns our stance from sympathy to empathy. It can be expressed as:

“Do unto others as *they* would have you do unto them.”

This highlights mutual respect. This mutual respect requires knowing ourselves and what shapes and colours our perspective, and to getting to know others in a genuine, heart-to-heart way. This takes time, and patience, but empathy connects hearts, and it is what our world needs...

Heart connections – remembering that we are all much more alike than we might believe on the inside and seeking to make a connection rather than making an assumption based on what’s going on on the outside – this is what our world needs as we dismantle systemic racism, as we free the oppressed, as we right the injustices that are all around. This is our call, our vocation, as Christian disciples.

June 21<sup>st</sup>. National Indigenous Day of Prayer, which we acknowledge and honour in our service this morning.

Residential Schools. The 60s Scoop. There were some heartbreaking assumptions by settlers in this history. This history is full of disconnection

and injustice. Those assumptions continue today. That disconnection and injustice continue today. Present brokenness in Indigenous communities, harms to Indigenous people, tell us that we are not living from a place of heart connection.

Recommendations, calls to action, reports, and laws aren't going to change our world. It's our perspective that has to change. It is our relationships. It's our sense of self, and how we relate to one another and to our world – that has to change...

The Gospel passage appointed for National Indigenous Day of Prayer is the Prologue of John's Gospel.

We've just heard the First Nations translation of this passage. In it, we hear about the light the darkness cannot overcome, cannot put out. When we stop comparing the insides of ourselves to the outside of others and remember that we are much more alike than we might think, we acknowledge that light. When we do unto others as they would have us do unto them, we kindle that light. We respect that light in each other and in all of creation. Letting our own light shine – especially into the dark places in our world – and looking for the light in others is relating heart to heart, and this is what will bring the change our world needs so desperately...

We can't change the past. We can only be in the present, and this present is where we are called to stop measuring the inside of ourselves against the outside of others and to live by the platinum rule: to do unto others as they would have us do unto them. To seek to know each other from the inside out.

These first verses of John's Gospel are infused with mystery and "more"; it's one of my favourite passages of scripture because of that mystery - the poetry of these verses stretches me out of time and tangibility. This mystery and "more" touches something deep in our humanity: a whisper, a longing, a searching.

Yet then we have verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us", and in the First Nations version that we heard this morning an even more vivid assertion: Creator's Word became a flesh-and-blood human being and pitched his sacred tent among us, living as one of us.

The Word – the Christ, having always been and always being – pitches his sacred tent among us. Jesus pitched his in first century Palestine, and began a radical relating, heart-to-heart.

We heard this, this morning:

"Creator's Word became a flesh-and-blood human being and pitched his sacred tent among us, living as one of us. We looked upon his great

beauty and saw how honorable he was, the kind of honor held only by this one Son who fully represents his Father—full of his great kindness and truth.”

And:

“No one has ever seen the Great Spirit, but the one Son, who is himself the Great Spirit and closest to the Father’s heart, has shown us what he is like.”

Jesus has shown us what God is like. God is not angry and distant. Not cruel and judgemental. God is full of great kindness and truth.

We need the mystery and “more” that John’s Gospel offers us; we need to tend to that whisper, longing or searching in ourselves. We need to tend to the light in ourselves – to know ourselves as beloved – so that we can acknowledge that light anywhere and everywhere, starting right where we are – so that we can pitch our tents and relate heart-to-heart as Jesus did.

We do that tending, that kindling of the light with what Jesus showed us about God: we do it with kindness. With compassion – for ourselves, and for others, and for our world.

We do this as individuals, and we do it as a collective, as a community – this is what church is!

One of Brian MacLaren’s books is called “We Make the Road By Walking”. In it he says this:

“You are not finished yet. You are ‘in the making.’ You have the capacity to learn, mature, think, change, and grow. You also have the freedom to stagnate, regress, constrict, and lose your way. Which road will you take? What’s true of you is also true for every community of people, including our spiritual communities...I believe that all of us play a role in choosing and creating our futures—as individuals and as communities. We don’t need to wait passively for history to happen to us. We can become protagonists in our own story. We can make the road by walking.”

This reminds us to keep moving. To keep growing and changing, and to seek to do that together, connected heart to heart.

In the June edition of *The Anglican Journal*, National Indigenous Bishop Chris Harper offered “A call to lift up the feather of prayer and love”. It was included in Friday’s newsletter. Part of his prayer is that we may accept truths other than our own, and that we may walk with God. He reminds us that together we walk in prayer.

In a few minutes we'll share in a ritual. You were given a piece of paper at the beginning of our service and invited to write a prayer on it. You're invited to make your way to the front and to place that paper in our basket here at the front. On Thursday, at our Summer Solstice Labyrinth Walk we'll burn those pieces of paper in our chiminea as a tangible reminder of our prayer and our call to right relationship and meaningful connection. May this ritual make space for us to acknowledge the brokenness in ourselves, in our country, and in our relationships, particularly with our Indigenous siblings. May it remind us that we are called to keep moving, together, grounded in prayer, relating heart to heart, from the inside out, in Jesus' name. Amen.