

## Order of Service for September 19, 2021 - Pentecost 17

### GATHERING

#### Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that we are worshipping in Mi'kmaqi, the unceded, unsundered, and ancestral home of the Mi'kmaw people.

#### Gathering Song - 852, Golden Breaks the Dawn

Golden breaks the dawn, comes the eastern sun;  
like a rider strong, set the course to run.  
Birds above me fly, flowers bloom below;  
through the earth and sky God's great mercies flow.

Holy, living God, keep me safe today;  
though I weary plod, make me kind, I pray.  
Let me guide our youth, honour weak and old;  
let me serve with truth, and God's love un-fold.

Give me daily bread, while I do my part;  
bright skies overhead, gladness in my heart.  
Simple wants provide, evil let me shun;  
Jesus at my side, till the day is done.

*(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)*

#### Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

#### Kyrie

We confess that we are too eager to judge others, and claim forgiveness for us. Lord, have mercy.

We confess that we have turned our backs on the image of God in our neighbours. Christ, have mercy.

Responding to God's call, we claim mercy for *others*; we claim *responsibility* for ourselves. Lord, have mercy.

#### Prayer of the Day

Let us pray. O God, our teacher and our guide, you draw us to yourself as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

### WORD

#### Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. God has called us through the proclamation of the good news,  
That we may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia

#### Gospel Reading Mark 9:30-37

The holy gospel according to Mark.

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into

human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

The gospel of the Lord.

## Sermon

Six thousand five hundred.

That’s where we are now.

It started with two hundred and fifteen. You will remember back in the summer, some people took some ground penetrating radar to what had been the Kamloops Residential School, and explored the ground around the school yard. They discovered that there were 215 unmarked graves of Indigenous children buried there. Children who had been forcibly, under the cover of the law, taken from their families and made to attend a school which had as its primary purpose to train those children to become dark-skinned copies of ourselves. And those who died were simply considered collateral damage, and were buried, and were forgotten. In many cases, the families weren’t even notified.

And now we are up to 6,500. And it is certain that that number will climb.

Thirteen years ago, Canada established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to uncover the difficult and painful history of the Residential Schools. Among other things, they determined that a number of the “students” died while attending the schools. Based on the records they had available to them, the number of dead children they suggested was something over 4,000. But they did acknowledge that it was just an estimate, and the number could be higher; much higher.

It now stands at 6,500. And only a handful of the 130 Residential School grounds have actually been subjected to that ground penetrating radar. The likelihood is that we are still only looking at the tip of the iceberg.

Many of you are familiar with Orange Shirt Day. It was started 5 years ago when a woman named Phyllis Webstad told her story. She is an Indigenous woman of the Shuswap people in what we call British Columbia. When she was 6 years old, she received her order to go to a Residential School. She didn’t know what that meant, so she was excited to go to school. Her grandmother, who was raising her, wanted to encourage her excitement, so she took her shopping to buy some new clothes for school. She got her a bright orange shirt with laces down the front.

But when she arrived at the school, she was given a uniform which looked like everyone else’s uniform, and she was given a haircut which looked like everyone else’s haircut. Her orange shirt was taken away and never returned. That was only the beginning of her trauma, but that story was emblematic of what was to come.

It took a couple of decades before she was able even to *begin* the process of coming to grips with what had happened to her, and it took a few more decades before she could actually start telling her story. Six years ago, she told her story at an event held on the site of the school she had been made to attend, and when people heard it, Orange Shirt Day instantly became a

thing. September 30th was selected because that was the day students were expected to show up at the schools.

As might be imagined, given the so-called “discovery” of the 6,500 unmarked graves which have happened this year, 2021’s Orange Shirt Day has taken on rather more importance in people’s minds. So much so, that this September 30th will not *only* be called Orange Shirt Day. This year, it will also be called Truth and Reconciliation Day, a chance for us all to consider what it means to be Treaty People.

Truth and Reconciliation Day is not necessarily going to be an easy day for us. It will mean being honest with ourselves, and it will also mean listening as others are honest with us. Being confronted with truth puts us in a pretty vulnerable position; and since we don’t like being vulnerable, it will take some effort for us to stay in that scary place.

I suspect it will be a lot like what the disciples of Jesus felt when they arrived at their destination, and were relaxing after their trip. Jesus asked a simple question, really. “So, what were you guys talking about while we were walking all that way?” The problem, of course, was that they had been comparing their resumés, in order to see which one of them was most qualified to be “in charge” of the other disciples.

And, as much as we don’t like to admit it, we are just as guilty of this as they were! We don’t go around saying, “Hey, I’m the greatest person in this room!” But we’ve all been involved in congregational meeting where someone will get up to speak, and will start by saying something like, “I’ve been part of this congregation for 30 years, and I think....” And someone else will get up later and say, “Well, *I’ve* been part of this congregation for **60** years! And *I* think....”

And I’ll be honest, pastors play this game, too! I’ve heard a number of clergy say things like, “Yeah, well, when *I* went through seminary, we had to *work* at it!”

The problem, of course, is that Jesus comes up to us, the Jesus who we claim to “the way, the truth and the life,” and asks us a question which reveals the truth about us. And it’s not a very comfortable truth, is it? We like to think we’re caring; we like to think we’re compassionate. But then Jesus sits down in our midst, and takes up an Indigenous child, and says, “How you have treated this child is how you have treated me.”

There’s a lot of challenge in this story, isn’t there? There’s a lot of discomfort. But that is frequently the first step in *any* learning situation. The first thing we need to learn is that we need forgiveness. The first thing we need to wrap our heads around is that we are not as innocent as we like to think. We have participated in injustice. We have benefitted from selfishness. We have indeed played the “Who’s the greatest?” game, and we have allowed ourselves to be convinced that white skin is greater.

But even as we are confronted by that terribly uncomfortable truth, we are, at the *very same time*, confronted with the love of Jesus who does not walk away from us, but who sits in that uncomfortable space with us, and then says, “You know what? You are still capable of being the loving people I have called you to be. You are still capable of sharing the grace of God with your neighbour. You are still capable of welcoming the stranger, and embracing the weak, and extending hospitality to the vulnerable.”

And then he points us to that Indigenous child (which he has been holding all this time), and says, “Here. Welcome this child today. Show love to this child today. Look for the image of the divine in this child today. Give up your greatness games; they’re not going to get you anywhere, anyway! Love others, today. Embrace others, today. Greet others, today. And in that, you will not only be showing God’s love; you will also be experiencing the love of God for you.”

This story of Jesus confronting his disciples, and picking up that child, has done a great job of setting the stage for us, folks. We have the opportunity to really enter *into* the commemoration of this year's Orange Shirt Day. We have the chance to fully wrap ourselves around Truth and Reconciliation Day this September 30th. Because that's exactly where Jesus is calling us to go.

The stage is set. We're "*on*," church! Amen.

## RESPONSE TO THE WORD

### Hymn of the Day - 641, All Are Welcome

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;  
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;

#### *Refrain*

All are welcome, all are welcome,  
All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,  
Where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness and a symbol of God's grace;  
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: *Refrain*

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:  
A banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;  
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us: *Refrain*

*(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)*

### Prayers of the People

A - Let us offer our prayers for the world God loves, the church God calls, and for all people according to their needs.

[*Short pause*]

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the small, set us free from our obsession with large, with success, with strength. Open us to your presence in the tiny, in failure, in the fragile. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the weak, make us more aware of the blessings which are given in tiredness, in vulnerability, in helplessness. Show us how you are present when we can't do it anymore. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the antagonist, it is uncomfortable when you challenge us, when you call us to account, when you ask us questions that show us who we are. Unlock our hearts to these confrontations, that we might discover the grace you bring. Show us who we can become. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the unwelcome, you call your church to work for reconciliation. We confess that we have failed to do this. We do not address discrimination in government

policies; we are silent in the face of 6,500 unmarked graves at Residential Schools. Turn your church around. Turn your church toward the stranger. Turn your church toward the ministry of building relationships, especially when we are afraid to try. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the sick, enable us to discover your healing love with those who are separated, isolated, hurting and dying, especially those we name before you.

*[Long pause]*

God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Loving Jesus who comes in the child, in the uncounted, in the disposable. We ask for grace to receive you, for hope to see you, for faith to trust you, and for love to respond to you, for the sake of the world you love. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

P - We ask all this in the name of Jesus, who continues to teach us to pray,

### **Lord's Prayer**

C - Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

## **SENDING**

### **Benediction**

P - May almighty God,

The Father who has created strangers for us to get to know,

The Son (†) who asks awkward questions to show us who we are,

And the Spirit who makes us capable of sharing grace,

bles us all, now and forever.

C - Amen.

### **Sending Song - 537, On Our Way Rejoicing**

On our way rejoicing gladly let us go.

Christ our Lord has conquered; vanquished is the foe.

Christ without, our safety; Christ within, our joy;

who, if we be faithful, can our hope destroy?

*Refrain:*

On our way rejoicing, as we homeward move,

hearken to our praises, O blest God of love!

Unto God the Father joyful songs we sing;

unto God the Saviour thankful hearts we bring;

unto God the Spirit bow we and adore,

on our way rejoicing now and evermore. *Refrain:*

*(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)*

**Dismissal**

P - Go in peace. Welcoming the children.

C - Thanks be to God!

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