

Carol's Reflection – Nov 20 2021

How is it that we meet someone for the first time?

We might say hello to someone on the street, or chat in a line at the grocery store.

We might have a first day of school, or a class in our retirement. We might start a volunteer position, or some employment.

We might hold a newborn in our arms, and have our emotions make the introduction for themselves. This is a beloved child, this is a beloved child of God.

Funny how as we age, those introductions are not so clear to us. Our emotions do not tell us that the persons on the street, or in the line, or in the class or...or... is a beloved child of God – we want to know more.

And, if the conversation progresses past a congenial hello, we often find ourselves with a variation of 'Who are you?'

People might answer with their name – and then might add, what they do, or who they are related to –

We might describe ourselves as a daughter/son/child of...

Or as a Mom/Dad/aunt/uncle/grandparent/sibling/cousin...

We get it. And we do it.

We might even claim ourselves as a part of a group, or a team, or a congregation –

Or we claim our career is if that is who we are – we are defined by what we do.

And sometimes, some idea of who we are precedes us.

Oh – I know who you are – I know/knew your Mom/Dad/grandparent/sibling...

Oh – I know who you are – you are a golfer/curler/swimmer...

Oh – I know who you are – you work at...

Today's Bible readings are about the question – who are you? And, in hearing the stories, we are invited to know the answer to that question – who are you – when it comes to Jesus the Christ.

Let's start with the passage from John. Jesus has been arrested and is brought to Pilate – the Governor of the region. They are meeting for the first time, but clearly they know each other by reputation. As the ruler, Pilate wants to know – is Jesus a king. Clearly there will not be room for another ruler –

Jesus' answer is about who he is, and what he does –

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

It is the integration of who he is and what he does. Pilate's word is 'king', but Jesus does not claim such a 'worldly' title. He has come to testify to the truth – to God's truth – and that is the gift of hope that will move us forward.

Jesus' whole ministry has been about teaching God's truth. It is 'love God AND love your neighbour; welcome the children, feed the hungry, care for the outcast, heal the sick, and in all things know that we are created in the image of God – we are all God's beloved children.

Beloved Children of God. BCOG.

It's a timeless lesson – and it is key to how we answer the question 'who are you'? There are a lot of times, when we answer the question with the word 'just'. I am just a Mom... I am just a part of the congregation... I am just a ...

To use the word just in that fashion might be grammatically correct but it is theologically wrong. The word 'just' is Biblical, but not like that.

Biblically, to use the word just – it is about JUSTICE – it is never about not being enough. For Jesus, as he taught God's truth, as he testified to the truth, it was justice that was at his core.

Beloved Children of God – that's who we are – and even if it is not how we introduce ourselves – ever – we need to know it at the centre of our being – for when we know it, that we are BCOG – then all the other parts of our answers come into perspective. When we know at our core that we are loved by God, then we are free to live love for others, to respect ourselves, to honour ourselves, and most importantly, to love ourselves.

We can love because we know that God first loves us. And that is the truth to which Christ came to bear.

Jesus is introduced in the reading from Revelation as 'the faithful witness'. Jesus is the one with the promise of new life—Jesus is foundational for living in right relationship. Jesus has called forth the best from people – he has fed the hungry –even on the sabbath – he has lived a mission and ministry that was not about the bureaucracy of faith but about the Spirit of God.

And it is in that spirit that we are called to live.

Over the past few days we have heard countless stories of the devastation in British Columbia. And in the midst of that, we have heard story after story of people who are making the effort to help others. The cattle farmers working together to rescue stranded animals. The people sharing supplies with those they might never meet by leaving their homes open – trusting that they will not be looted or robbed but trying to make sure that those who could not evacuate could access pantries of canned goods.

When we hear those stories we are reminded that every small act can make a difference. We can all make a difference. When we live following Jesus – when we live respect, reconciliation, care, compassion, grace, hope, justice, love, truth, peace, and more, we are living as if Jesus really is our ruler/our leader.

On this last Sunday of the 'Church Year', this Reign of Christ Sunday, let us celebrate the gift that comes with this day. In following the way of Christ, in living in God's love, there is hope for our hurting world.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.