

## **Carol's reflection: (Nov 7, 2021)**

Which 'wisdom' saying resonates with you?

Learn something new every day?

Or

Everything old is new again?

If it is 'Learn something new every day', perhaps it is because you are someone with eyes and ears wide open to all that is around you – and – aware of just how big this world is and how much there is that we do not know.

If it is 'Everything old is new again', perhaps it is because you are someone with eyes and ears wide open to all that is around you – and -- aware of just how connected we are to one another, and how time can be almost circular.

And then there is the possibility that both of those things resonate with you – and with eyes and ears wide open to all that is around you – you are aware of how life has an ebb and flow and how we do learn new things and we do see patterns repeating.

Certainly the Gospel of Mark is filled with both wisdoms.

Learn something new every day is the story of the disciples who follow Jesus and never seem to quite get it. Again and again they experience his teaching and bear witness to Jesus healing people, and Jesus casting out demons, and feeding crowds. Again and again they are present and yet their reaction is almost as if every lesson is new.

And, 'Everything old is new again' is much the same. The disciples see the endlessness of hurt and oppression. There is always a new person to be healed – different and yet the same. And, their eyes are constantly being opened.

Today's Gospel is another lesson on justice. The disciples are invited to learn something new every day because, for Jesus, everything old is new again.

Oppression, oppression, oppression. For Jesus that is the sin he sees all around him. He sees people who fail to treat others with justice and respect. He sees people in need. He sees the failure of society to do even what it has promised to do.

It was Jewish law to take care of the widows and the orphans. It wasn't just something that you might do, it was something that you must do. And yet, Jesus is citing the example of those who take advantage of the widows – some of the poorest of the poor in that society.

When a widow did not have any way to earn money, sometimes people would lend money – and sometimes those money lenders knew that the widow would never be able to re-pay that money – and so the widow's possessions would be open to claim – they

could essentially foreclose on her home, they could take away everything. And what was the additional sin – sometimes those people were perceived to be upstanding citizens of the community – respected in the marketplace, with best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets.

They might have also been – as it was in the case in Mark’s gospel – religious leaders who stressed time and time again, the need to worship God – to GIVE to God – through the tithing at the temple.

And, as Jesus sits down to watch people make donations to the temple, he sees both. He sees those with deep resources making their tithe, and he sees the widow giving all that she has.

Before we go down a path that implies that God wants us to give all that we have – we need to go down the path of justice.

Remember the words in the prophet Micah?

With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.  
(Micah 6:6-8)

Justice is linked to mercy and walking humbly with God. God is not asking for a show. God is calling us to love one another in a way that is inclusive and just. Justice is taking care of the widow. Justice is providing for the hungry and the homeless. Justice is living that everyone matters. Justice is healing.

As Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud concluded her work with 1JustCity, she wrote a letter of thanks to the individuals and congregations that have been supporters and partners in this incredible share of Christ’s ministry. It was a thank you letter for all that WE (all of us WE) have taught her.

She says: “You’ve taught me that loving your neighbour isn’t an idea, it’s an action. It means socks; it means a place to sleep; it means a warm meal; it means a judgement-free, caring ear, and it means so much more than can be put into words.”

That's the Jesus message. Loving our neighbour is about bearing witness to one another's humanity with respect and care.

Can we be people with eyes and ears wide open to all that is around us?

Can we learn something new every day – about justice – about one another – about our fragile planet – about how everything and everyone is linked and connected and – most importantly – loved by God.

And, can we say, that this is completely circular? Everything old is new again. The old lessons need to be as vital today as they were before. For indeed, God's love cannot be shared without us.

So let's take these lessons and be generous people. Let's do right. Let's be generous with our care for others – whether that is expressed in time given, phone calls to the lonely or isolated, meals delivered to shut ins - or in financial resources shared -- with this congregation, or 1JustCity, or the Mission and Service Fund – or -- ...

Let's be generous in living with respect and loving with intention.

So that we may all know life in all its fullness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.