

Daily Prayer

Feria

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys.

We begin by saying

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord,
and teach me your paths.

Psalm 25.3

The First Reading

When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do.' And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world. Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to buy grain, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan.

Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like

strangers and spoke harshly to them. 'Where do you come from?' he said. They said, 'From the land of Canaan, to buy food.' And he put them all together in prison for three days.

On the third day Joseph said to them, 'Do this and you will live, for I fear God: if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned. The rest of you shall go and carry grain for the famine of your households, and bring your youngest brother to me. Thus your words will be verified, and you shall not die.' And they agreed to do so. They said to one another, 'Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us.' Then Reuben answered them, 'Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.' They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. He turned away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes.

Genesis 41.55-57; 42. 5-7a, 17-24a

The Psalm

Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; *
it is good for the just to sing praises.

Praise the Lord with the harp; *
play to him upon the psaltery and lyre.

Sing for him a new song; *
sound a fanfare with all your skill upon the trumpet.

For the word of the Lord is right, *
and all his works are sure.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, *
on those who wait upon his love,
To pluck their lives from death, *
and to feed them in time of famine.
Our soul waits for the Lord; *
he is our help and our shield.
Indeed, our heart rejoices in him, *
for in his holy name we put our trust.
Let your loving-kindness, O Lord, be upon us, *
as we have put our trust in you.

Psalm 33.1-4, 18-22

The Gospel Reading

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near."

Matthew 10.1-7

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

Paul MacLean

Joseph, Family Conflict and Residential Schools

The first reading today is the pivotal point in the story that concludes the first book of the Bible. Similarly, we are at a pivotal point in the Canadian story, as relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are again thrown into the spotlight with the discovery of so many unmarked graves. This ancient story has surprising relevance for the story that today we are in the midst of telling and making. Not just relevance, but a message of hope won from the midst of destructive conflict.

The Book Genesis can be seen as a series of stories that address the question: Does conflict always result in destruction? Will conflict inevitably destroy the human enterprise? Note that Genesis treats conflict as inevitably part of the human condition, so there is no question of a life without conflict. The question is, Can conflict be managed without destroying everyone, and setting off a never-ending cycle of revenge?

If we put to one side the various myths (creation, flood, tower of Babel etc.) that are found in Genesis, the main theme that courses through the book is that of family conflict: Cain and Abel, Abram and Lot, Sarai and Hagar (with the birth of Ishmael), Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and finally the conflict engendered by jealousy and betrayal in Jacob's offspring, leading to the selling of Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

The former chief rabbi of the UK, Jonathan Sacks, has suggested that the common feature of all these conflicts, in fact possibly of all conflict, is displacement. Cain is displaced in the family system through deceit by his brother Abel, giving up his birthright as the oldest, and in retaliation he kills his brother. We could look at the

role of displacement in all the following family feuds and conflicts. However, what is often overlooked is how God provides a way to mitigate the destructive forces of jealousy and rage that result from 'losing your place in the family'. Cain, as a murderer, would be forever an outcast and the object of revenge. But God intervenes and gives him a mark that will protect him from being killed in retaliation. And we could find similar interventions in all the subsequent conflicts. Although Hagar is cast out, she and her son Ishmael are divinely protected. Isaac is preserved from sacrifice by the intervention of an angel. Esau does not take revenge for Jacob's treachery and trickery. In all these cases God provides a 'place' for the 'displaced' thereby breaking the cycle of revenge. But the most profound commentary on conflict is reserved for the final, Joseph story.

The story of Canada involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is not the story of an internal family conflict. It is however, clearly an extended story of displacement in which the stated intention of European settlers was first to marginalize and then to assimilate the Indigenous population. Unmarked graves are a stark symbol of this intention: you are displaced to the extent that you cease to exist, even in memory. The burning of churches, usually interpreted as a retaliation (although not condoned by Indigenous leaders and residential school survivors), is the cycle of revenge playing out.

Back to Joseph. We can see the origins of his brothers' jealousy in his father's favouritism, and in his own high opinion of himself, placing himself well above his brothers through his famous dreams of greatness. And we're well acquainted with the brothers' outrage, plotting and revenge that leads to his slavery in Egypt. The story leaves the family and shifts to Joseph, and we might wonder if the point of it all is personal redemption, the typical American plot of an

individual (immigrant, slave, or refugee) plunging to the depths and then rising to a successful career as a CEO in one of the most powerful civilizations of the time.

But the famine intervenes and brings the brothers to Egypt to buy food for the desperate family. Here is where our reading takes up the story and plays out the re-unification of Joseph and his brothers in one of the most affecting and dramatic series of scenes in the Bible. When the brothers prostrate themselves before Joseph, without recognizing him, the plot hangs in the balance. What will Joseph do from his position of power? Will he take revenge on his treacherous brothers who were the source of so much misery? Will this final Genesis story end in punishment for wrongdoing and vindication for the wronged Joseph?

It is up to Joseph. He, of course, begins by testing them, accusing them of being spies, imprisoning them, and pumping them for information about the father and his youngest brother who was left behind. But underneath the harsh, accusatory facade we know there is the stirring of emotion: 'he turned away from them and wept.' There is something going on here that is far different from the desire for revenge and retribution. It is also true that the power relationships have been reversed, with Joseph now in control of resources and the brothers reduced to begging for famine relief. However, Joseph does not use this change in fortune to reveal himself and debase his brothers with magnanimous behaviour. No, the story is leading us in another direction - one of reconciliation in which relationships are both changed and restored. The reading today is the pivotal point in that direction, and Joseph chooses the path of reconciliation.

To draw a lesson from this story for us today, I suggest we see the root of the swirling emotions roused by the recent, but predicted

discovery of unmarked graves, in the displacement of Indigenous peoples by the long history of colonialism in Canada. The question before us is, How do we move forward? Can we move forward? Is it possible to change the cycle of displacement, subjugation, reaction and outrage with a pathway that will enable us all to live together in this place? Just as Joseph was at a pivotal moment when he met his brothers, who assumed he lay in an unmarked grave, so too we have a choice. The path of reconciliation requires much from everyone.

What is the message of hope? I suggest we read what Joseph says to his brothers as he reveals his identity and they receive his forgiveness, and find our hope in the capacity of God to offer reconciliation, protection and new life to humanity despite all our tendencies to jealousy and destruction:

'Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me.... I am your brother, Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life." And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.'

The faith that God intends to preserve life and bring good out of evil intent is what we can derive from this powerful story. And we, later arrivals in this country, need to begin by talking to our indigenous brothers and sisters.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ A Song of the Lamb

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ♦
whose judgements are true and just.

Praise our God, all you his servants, ♦
all who fear him, both small and great.

The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns: ♦
let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory.

For the marriage of the Lamb has come ♦
and his bride has made herself ready.

Blessed are those who are invited ♦
to the wedding banquet of the Lamb.

Revelation 19.1b,2a,5b,6b,7,9b

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

Creator God,
you have promised to hear when we pray
in the name of your Son.

Therefore in confidence and trust
we pray for the Church:

Holy One, enliven the Church for its mission
that we may be salt of the earth and light to the world.

Breath fresh life into your people

Give us power to reveal Christ in word and action.

We pray for the world:

Creator of all,

Lead us and every people into ways of justice and peace.

That we may respect one another in freedom and truth.

Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it.

Teach us to care creatively for its resources.

We pray for the community:

God of truth, inspire with your wisdom

those whose decisions affect the lives of others

that all may act with integrity and courage.

Give grace to all whose lives are linked with ours.

May we serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

We pray for those in need:

God of hope, comfort and restore

all who suffer in body, mind or spirit.

May they know the power of your healing love.

Make us willing agents of your compassion.

Strengthen us as we share in making people whole.

We honour those who have died and remember those who
mourn:

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in the faith
of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone.

Father, into your hands we commend them.

Give comfort to those who mourn.

Bring them peace in their time of loss.

We praise you for all your saints

who have entered your eternal glory.

May their example inspire and encourage us.

We prayer for ourselves and our ministries:

Your word is a lamp for our feet.

In darkness and in light,

in trouble and in joy,

help us, heavenly Father,

to trust your love,

to serve your purpose,

and to praise your name,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our prayers conclude with the Collect

Almighty God,

your Son Jesus Christ has taught us

that what we do for the least of your children

we do also for him.

Give us the will to serve others

as he was the servant of all,

who gave up his life and died for us,

but lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

A prayer to remember all those whose unmarked graves have been found

Loving God,

we pray in grief for the precious little souls.

We pray for their families - for their heavy loss - that even now,

you would bind up their hearts with your healing love.

We pray for humility;

to acknowledge and ask forgiveness

for the evil in which we have been complicit.

And then Lord, we pray for the gift of righteous anger;

that it may fuel our recommitment to work for justice and love;

and fuel our resolve to call out the supremacy narratives

that damage and diminish the divine in us all.

We pray all this in the strong and just name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

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.

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 for ever. Amen

We conclude

May God grant to the world justice, truth and peace.

Amen.

Credits:

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The Prayer of Remembrance: The Rt Rev'd Susan Bell, Bishop of the Diocese of Niagara (adapted)

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