

Homily for Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, 4 July 2021

2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

The Rev'd W Glenn Empey, M.Div.

JESUS CAME TO HIS HOMETOWN, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

And they took offence at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."

So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Mark 6:1-13

THERE WERE SOME—a few, a very few—who tried to call attention to what they saw as wrong. But, the authorities didn't hear. They were not listening. And so a few prophetic voices went unrecognized and unheard.

Jesus would have understood. When he was in his own hometown, whatever was going on there made him marvel at the unbelief around him. He said that he could do little there except heal a few isolated people. The people were not listening and they did not hear. Jesus knows about having a prophetic voice in ones own land and about not being heard.

It was the same case with the few voices who tried to call attention to conditions in Residential Schools in Canada. To move on from the revelations that we have been learning in the last few weeks will not be as simple as shaking dust from our feet. Nor should it be.

I don't think any of us knew, and I don't think any us yet knows deeply, what was going on between our government and the Indigenous People. I fear that we have only just begun to hear what was taking place. There were Residential Schools throughout Canada. Across the country, more abandoned and forgotten cemeteries are being discovered where children lie in more unmarked graves.

As a clergy, I am shaken by how clergy and religious acted in Residential Schools. I feel numbed and deeply shamed. I cannot comprehend at all how anyone could understand the teachings of Jesus and act in this manner toward anyone, but especially not toward children. It would mean being in some state of unbelief. And, I think it would be far worse than the unbelief Jesus experienced in his hometown.

The toll falls overall to the Church and as a priest of the Church I feel a shocking numbness cloaked in a pall of shame. It's not a matter of pointing fingers. It is about understanding.

I recognize that five hundred years of history are being reviewed in glimpses. But, for now, the irrefutable fact is that what went on in Residential Schools, and the whole premise of Residential Schools, were wrong.

So, I ask ... and I wonder... and I pray ... what can I do? What can anyone do?

For now, all I think I can do is to listen and try to hear.

And, it seems to me that to be able to actually hear and to do the work to reach understanding will mean walking a long pathway. It will take a long walk with Indigenous People for us to hear and for us to work toward understanding. It's a journey along a pathway where we need to do the listening and, for now, not much talking.

Let us listen. Let us be attentive to hear prophetic voices in the land so that demons can be cast out, anointings can bring comfort, and miracles can bring healing.

It will be a humbling walk.

A Prayer

Let us pray,

O Lord, you sent apostles out in a call to repentance. Teach us to be listening so that we can hear. Help us to learn. May our weakness teach us compassion and may compassion be our strength in understanding. Amen.

*The Morning Prayer Service is available in video on the parishes' Facebook Pages:
St Matt Buckhorn
St Luke's Anglican Church Peterborough*