

Sermon notes -Dec. 16, 2018

“Joy is not the Status Quo”

Jordan Cantwell

Begin with my story about setting priorities for my term as Moderator – wisdom from my advisors re: invitations to Indigenous communities... not knowing what that would look like

- Discovered I need to listen and learn... to see what I am unable to see because of my privilege
- My perceptions are shaped by my privilege... I need new eyes to see what others who don't share my privilege see and know and experience

With the help of Indigenous relatives I am beginning to recognize patterns of thinking and acting in myself and in the church that normalize my experience, validate my expectations, and affirm my perceptions of our life together while ignoring and invalidating the experiences, perspectives and hopes of our Indigenous relations.

While these patterns of thinking and acting remain in place, I am convinced that the reconciliation that I/we are seeking is not possible ... there must be fundamental change if we want to truly embody our commitments and desire for right relationship.

Simplest and most difficult lesson I need to learn = if I want to be different, I cannot stay the same.

John is proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins... in other words – an immersion in a new way of thinking about things, a total change of heart that leads to right relationship with God

Folks are coming out to be baptised because they are looking for change... they know that their relationships with God and with their neighbours is off track... things aren't as they're supposed to be... they're looking for some hope that things can be different, that what feels broken can be fixed...

John says – you can't be made new if you cling to the same old ways of thinking and acting

Just performing a ritual is not enough... the ritual can only point to the transformation that takes place inside you... you gotta allow yourself to be deeply changed in ways that will become visible in your living

When pressed by folks about the kinds of the changes they need to make he says:

to the crowds – think differently about stuff... get rid of the idea that there is “my stuff” and “your stuff” – there is abundance and there is need; your relationship with your neighbours and with stuff will be right when the abundance is redistributed to meet the needs....

to the tax collectors & soldiers – do not use the power and privilege you have to get rich at the expense of others... just cuz the system is set up that way doesn't make it right

The kinds of changes he's suggesting undermine the assumptions and expectations on which we build our relationships and our identities... The goal is not to get ahead... in fact, the very notion of getting ahead means someone is left behind

John invites us to pursue gratitude not wealth, to seek humility not status, and to relinquish privilege for the sake of mutuality and the common good

His challenge speaks powerfully to me as I reflect on the wisdom and anger and hope that has been shared with me by our Indigenous relatives...

I hear their voices calling me to be different, to readjust my priorities and my thinking... and to bear fruit worthy of repentance

Friends, if we want to change, we cannot stay the same... we must be more

The “more” that we seek is not more wealth, more power, more comfort... it is more joy, more connection, more wholeness, more delight

We already know these aren't things our wealth and privilege can buy us... if they could, we wouldn't be standing on the banks of the Jordan River with the soldiers, tax collectors and crowds, seeking a path of reconciliation and right relationship that eludes us

Share story of John Thompson

Quote from p. 63 of *The Book of Joy*, by Douglas Abrams... a conversation with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama