

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 24th chapter.

Jesus actually stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

In their panic and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost.

Jesus said to them, "Why are you disturbed?"

Why do such ideas cross your mind?

Look at my hands and my feet.

It is I, really.

Touch me and see a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as I do."

After saying this, Jesus showed them the wounds.

They were still incredulous for sheer joy and wonder, so Jesus said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

After being given a piece of cooked fish, the Savior ate in their presence."

Then Jesus said to them, "Remember the words I spoke when I was still with you?"

Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms has been fulfilled."

Then Jesus opened their minds to the understanding of the scriptures, saying, "That is why the scriptures say that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

In the Messiah's name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of all this."

The Sermon

Once again, I am very glad to have the access to the sermons from the ELCIC.

Today's sermon is from the Reverend Tyler Gingrich, who happens to be in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Grace and peace to you from the one who comes among us and breathes life, who points us to a new day and whose presence is in us to take into the world,

Jesus Christ, amen.

I greet you from Treaty 1 territory upon which Gloria Dei Lutheran Church building is located.

For many thousands of years, Anishinaabeg, Ojibwe-Cree, Dakota, Dene Peoples and the Métis Nation have lived here.

We acknowledge hurts of the past.

We seek a new relationship with the original peoples of this land, one based in honor and deep respect.

Warning, the following may be uncomfortable for some.

Intersectionality.

Do you know that word?

A dictionary definition of intersectionality reads, "The interconnected nature of social categorizations, such as race, class, gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."

Put simply, intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked.

A few days ago, I went to a rally on what was called Fossil Fool's Day at the start of April.

This observance has been around since 2004, and since then, groups have organized events to oppose energy derived from fossil fuels, to promote education about alternate sources of energy, and to encourage support for climate justice, strong legislation, corporate responsibility, and a clean, renewable energy future.

The event I attended this year was to call on big banks, namely the Royal Bank of Canada, RBC being one of the biggest to divest from fossil fuel investment.

The point is that we, as a society, divest from carbon emitting fossil fuels for the sake of our common future, and generations to come who will be living with the more dire effects of climate change.

While it was a gathering to lift up our effect on the environment, also lifted up was how colonization has hurt indigenous people on this continent and around the world.

Indigenous people have often been at the forefront of the prevention of pipeline expansions, since pipelines cross all kinds of territory, including unceded, non-treaty lands on this continent.

So this year's event also lifted up the Wet-Souette-Nepa opposition to the Coastal Gas Link Project from Dawson Creek to Kitamat, in BC.

The land acknowledgement at the start of our fossil fuels day included a call to search the landfill.

Does your community begin with your gatherings with a land acknowledgement?

Many communities do.

As we seek better relationship with our indigenous neighbours, we also enter into their experience and listen to what matters, even if it means entering into difficult, uncomfortable moments and memories of trauma.

In Treaty 1, there has been a call to search the landfills for the remains of indigenous women who are missing and murdered.

Recently, it has been said that if the intention of a land acknowledgement is to recognize the relationship that indigenous peoples had with their land prior to colonization, we must also acknowledge

how indigenous peoples are regarded on those same lands today.

As land acknowledgments are routinely performed, indigenous women continue to be devalued, dehumanized and disposed of in landfills.

Do we acknowledge this reality and listen to the deep hurt and loss?

What if it were our family members, or better yet, can we view these beloved children of God as our family members?

In addition to the words for the environment, the land acknowledgement and indigenous songs, there were Palestinian flags and people wearing keffiyehs.

Words were chanted.

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

And from the sea to the river, Palestine will live forever.

Statistics about women, children and civilian deaths in the past six months were read out.

Numbers in the hundreds of schools that have been bombed, ambulances and hospitals that have been destroyed.

Could we see ourselves in the eyes of the devastated population of Gaza?

Could we dare to hold up stories that have been suppressed for fear of alienating Western allies?

Does the systematic oppression and death of the Palestinians echo parts of our history with our indigenous neighbors in Canada?

Voices at that rally believed that was the case.

I believe that is the case.

Are we willing to name genocide when we see it?

When vulnerable populations are out armed and prevented from receiving basic humanitarian aid?

I was also aware of people there who had been at rallies to support trans youth and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Sometimes our churches have harbored feelings of animosity and hatred towards our siblings of various sexual orientations and gender identities.

Are we willing to speak up for the oppressed when it means speaking out in order to create safe space for someone who has been marginalized?

In all of these places of social justice, we know that there are those who would put themselves on the opposite side, perhaps even you, as you listen to this, have felt some anxiety or that you don't want to hear these things that might be considered controversial and avoided.

With all of these things to consider, with these matters that have an effect on us all to some degree or

another, the story of Holy Week starts to take on flesh.

Where do we silence the voices that challenge the systems of power?

When do we end up siding with privilege and empire?

In our Lutheran churches, this may mean a call for deeper reflection.

It's notable that with Monday's eclipse, as much as it became sensational news and something to post about on social media, the reality is that we were all affected by the same sun and the same moon, that for a brief moment, blocked some of the sun sunlight for some of us in North America anyway.

My experience was looking up at cloud cover, but I was hearing news reports coming from other parts of the country and around the world.

It really was something we all joined in.

And there were these words repeated on newscasts about the timing of the moon moving completely in front of our view of our sun as totality approaches.

Did you hear those words?

They struck me.

I mean, they sounded a bit odd to me, but maybe there's something theological in it as the fullness of time is with us.

Totality, in the opportune place and moment, we may have this experience so that covers us fully.

Even a good Friday to Easter moment where the light goes out, but it does return.

And as an image, can we help light to return where there's darkness in other places of our life, with the new light of Easter shine through us?

Talk of intersecting matters of social justice and civil rights can be uncomfortable, especially if our needs are met and our rights and privileges feel safe.

Why worry about those of others?

If climate change doesn't feel like it's bearing down on me right here right now, why should I do anything for anybody else, including anyone of another place or a future time?

But that's kind of the point to our faith, to urge us out of ourselves, to turn us towards the experience and the humanity of others, towards the care of the earth, towards concern for future generations, realizing that life does not begin and end with any one of us.

And the purpose of our church communities needs to bring us together, each of us, as we are, having different backgrounds and lived experiences and inviting us to see and hear the other, the person across the aisle from where you're sitting right now, the person on the other side of the planet.

Well, our daily lives may be about our individual pursuits, our faith points us outward and invites a sense of grace and openness to the other, whether we agree with them or not.

And we live differently and compassionately as a result, hopefully.

It's not always easy, but this is also why we return week after week, to be nourished in word and sacrament for the journey.

Even as the journey of faith may sometimes be uncomfortable, Jesus comes among us and wishes us peace.

Christ knows that it is not easy.

God knows we are varied and diverse with different places of origin and different needs.

And we are invited to see Christ in each other and to live in ways that are mindful of all.

When we proclaim forgiveness of sins, when we hear peace be with you, we are acknowledging those places where we are broken.

We are acknowledging those places where there is division.

We are baptized into a family that is wider than we can ever imagine.

We are baptized into an all-encompassing love that goes beyond the places we're willing to love.

We are baptized into grace that urges us into new relationships always.

And we come to the table where there is forgiveness.

We come to the table where there is peace.

We receive God's grace, whoever we are, at whatever point of our journey we are.

And we are sent into the world as the presence and life of Christ.

New light, new life, hope for the world.

Alleluia Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed.

Amen.