

2021.06.20 SERMON National Indigenous Sunday ©Gyllian Davies†

We know this Gospel so well. You might even remember it from Sunday School when you were a child. It always reminds me of Mary Oliver's poem, Maybe, which begins like this:

*Maybe* by Mary Oliver

Sweet Jesus, talking  
his melancholy madness,  
stood up in the boat  
and the sea lay down,

silky and sorry.  
So everybody was saved  
that night.  
But you know how it is

when something  
different crosses  
the threshold—the uncles  
mutter together,

the women walk away,  
the young brother begins  
to sharpen his knife

**And then she concludes by telling us how the disciples wanted to forget...**

how the wind tore at the sails  
before he rose and talked to it --

tender and luminous and demanding  
as he always was --  
a thousand times more frightening  
than the killer storm.

Can you imagine yourself there? Can you imagine yourself there, in a boat that's pitching and yawing and taking on water... And maybe thinking, "This is it. This time we're not going to make it safe to shore." Really frightening, probably terrifying. And at the same time, there's Jesus, King of the Created Order, who came on the boat "just as he was" with none of the usual accoutrements of royalty, sleeping right through the storm. He is the essence of calm in the midst of the chaos, because all of life is in his command. And then... he tells the storm to settle down and it does. What would you feel? Relief? Thankfulness? Or terror even greater than before. "Who is this man?" the disciples want to know... "What have we gotten ourselves into!"

We know fear too. Do you remember how scary it was back at the beginning of the first

lockdown? Maybe wondering how many of us would die before it was over? Or how about the fears you've acquired during this time? And perhaps we've also become more closely acquainted with faith. Because no matter what is going on **God's all-powerful Word** is still spoken in our world. BUT we only hear it and recognize it if we are still and listen. We have to be willing to understand that God's word is not necessarily going to be what we ask for, what we want. We're not the ones with the sacred long view. We're not the ones with ancient wisdom... Thinking that God doing our will is evidence that God cares? ... I don't think so! And we do so want that, don't we! Come on God, prove you really care about us by choosing the action we want! Heal in the way we yearn for! Bestow wholeness the way we imagine it. It's not an accident that words about our will versus God's are embedded right in the centre of the great prayer Jesus taught us: Thy will be done.... Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is with You. It is faith that can carry us past the chaos of our own fears and confusion to the calm of silky seas. To the peace of Jesus sleeping, trusting, embodying all that is. King of the Created Order.

And don't we have to wonder since Jesus is King of Created Order what does that mean for us in terms of the **Climate Crisis**??? What does that tell us about our stewardship – half-hearted, distracted, ineffective, lacking any signs of passion... we complacently go along as if nothing is really wrong. I think of Greta Thunberg saying to many different prestigious and powerful gatherings of adults: "The house is on fire and you are doing nothing about it!" We might ask ourselves – what is wrong with us? Where is our faith in action? How are we so unmoved that we don't behave at all as if this is an emergency? What will it take for us to rise up and respond? To change our own ways and to demand the governments and corporations change their ways? What will it take for us to cherish God's Created Order as deeply as we do our own lives and those of our children?

Apparently not Pacific islands disappearing under the waves. Apparently not wild fire seasons that consume millions of acres and destroy entire cities. Apparently not droughts that threaten the capacity of Canadian farmers to produce the life-giving wheat that we and thirty other countries in the world depend on. Apparently not the probability that our great-great grandchildren may find themselves dying on a planet that no longer supports life.

So what will it take? What will it take for us to walk with Jesus, to honour and respect the Created Order? I don't know. I suspect you might not know either. BUT I think we better make it a priority to find out. Making the natural Created Order of prime importance in our lives – doesn't it make sense to give that everything we have if Jesus is King of the Created Order? Doesn't it make even more sense to be showing contrition and offering atonement for the many ways in which we've violated the natural world? And... I suspect that's the path we want to take if we want to show true penitence towards and desire for reconciliation with the indigenous peoples of Canada. I also suspect this is one of the things we could choose to do to restore some measure of trust with the First Nations.

And I *believe*... not if, but when we choose to treat the natural world – our planet - as sacred, holy and primary to our existence, GOD – Creator... Healer... Bright Flame of Life... and all the inhabitants of heaven will dance for joy. Amen.