**Sunday October 3rd, 2021**

**Mark 10: 2-16**

Jesus has ‘the patience of Job’, as my mother would have said. He is continually confronted by the religious establishment, looking for ways to trip him up and make their case against him. Time and again he turns their questions back to them, not answering their question directly, but in an attempt to reveal a little more of God’s word and reign. Jesus was also infinitely patient with his disciples. As they tried to keep the children away from him, Jesus instead becomes indignant and makes it plain that it is such as these little ones that the Kingdom of God belongs.

One has to remember that this welcome and statement from Jesus is opposite to the popular thinking of the time. Children were not valuable in Jesus’ time…mere chattels…more mouths to feed on an already tight budget. But in his usual way, Jesus upends the conventional thinking to demonstrate what God’s reign will look like.

We have just observed Truth and Reconciliation Week in Canada, including the first National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30th. We think we know the truth…the truth about the history of colonialism in Canada; the truth about the residential schools; the truth about the challenges our Indigenous sisters and brothers face; the truth about how they feel and how they should ‘move forward’ and let the past be in the past. The only truth we really know is that we do not know the whole truth. We are the colonizers…the people who arrived with power and privilege, and proceeded to take over. We do not know the thoughts and feelings, the losses and traumas, the hopes and dreams of our Indigenous sisters and brothers from all ages.

Before anything can change, we have to acknowledge the whole truth…a story that makes us uncomfortable, embarrassed and ashamed. The truth is, we should feel all of those things and more. But then we have to go past that, and acknowledge that we have a responsibility to work toward changing the present and improving the future. We have to take responsibility for what was, even though we cannot change the past. We have to acknowledge that indigenous history is almost invisible in our Canadian story…and that makes us racist. We have to have real remorse for what happened, and truly want to make amends. We have to commit to act…politically, socially and personally, because it’s the right thing to do.

Indigenous Archbishop Mark McDonald reminds us that repentance…turning back to God…is the way to become new people living a new life. But it’s our choice and that choice is intentional. Archbishop Mark reminds us that each of those little, defenseless, voiceless children who did not return from residential school had been baptized into the family of God. Each one of them was supposed to be just like those who wielded the power and privilege. Each one was supposed to be love and cared for.

Our God is a God of second chances, if we admit we were wrong. If we admit we are sorry for what has happened, are truly trying to make amends and honestly working toward lasting change. Now is as good a time as any to make a decision to use the power and privilege we have to make those changes. It continues to be the responsibility of every one of us to speak and act for those who can’t do that for themselves. Now is the time to turn our focus from ourselves, our perception and circumstances toward a truth we may not like.

The first National Truth and Reconciliation Day has passed. It would be easy for us to go back to the way things were. But now we know better, we have to do better. One way of going into the future is to learn all we can. On Tuesday October 18th, from 630-9 pm you can join in the PWRDF workshop, ‘Mapping the Ground We Stand On.’ This interactive workshop, also known as **The Mapping Exercise**, invites participants to *explore Indigenous presence on the map of Turtle Island/Canada, the history of Settler arrival, and their relationship to one another*. It also offers an opportunity for learning and reflection on the concepts of *Terra Nullius* (empty land), the Doctrine of Discovery and Indigenous knowledge.

Our Indigenous sisters and brothers have been waiting a long time for the rest of us to come to understand. They have had to be patient, because we have only just begun to ‘get it’. There is still a lot of ground to cover, between acknowledging the truth and arriving at reconciliation. And there’s always the chance that we won’t arrive at the point we want, because of the pain and suffering in the past, and whatever the future holds. We have to hope and trust that our enlightenment will open the door to healing and authentic change. We have the opportunity to begin to change what was. With God’s help, we can start new every day. AMEN