

The Holy Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, according to John 14:15-21

Jesus said: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.'

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

The Gospel of Christ.

Reflection

We shouldn't know her name. In 1797 she was born into slavery by parents who were enslaved. Isabella and her family were property. She had siblings she never really knew because they had been separated at a young age – that is, they had been sold to different masters. People like her were used, abused, and tossed away with impunity.

Things were changing. She lived in New York as the state moved towards emancipation and had a promise of freedom offered and then reneged upon. So, she 'walked off' with her youngest daughter 'believing that to be alright'.

By the grace of God, she found herself at the home of Isaac and Maria. Isaac paid her former owner \$20, buying her services until the state emancipation order came into effect within the next year.

When Isabella learned that her 5-year-old son had been illegally sold to an estate in Alabama she took the new owners to court with the help of Isaac and Maria. In doing so, she became one of the first black women to take a white man to court and win!

In 1843 she experienced a spiritual conversion. This led to her changing her name to Sojourner Truth – a name consistent with her understanding

that she was on a journey to tell the truth. She told her friends: “The Spirit calls me, and I must go.”

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Advocate. Spirit. Wisdom. We use many different terms to reference the Life-Giving Spirit that remains active calling and gifting those willing to listen. By the world’s standards we shouldn’t know Sojourner Truth. Her voice should have been insignificant. Still, God’s power working in the world can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Inspired by the Spirit, Sojourner Truth told the truth in ways that became hard to ignore.

In the face of controversies over human rights, Sojourner Truth gave the speech for which she is perhaps best known. Her words ring out demanding that she be acknowledged for her humanity. ‘Ain’t I a woman’ she says as she reminds the crowd that she has not been treated daintily as the white man says (white) women should be. ‘Ain’t I a woman’ she proclaims as she compares her strength to that of men and her sorrow to that of mothers. When they protest that women shouldn’t have the same rights as men because Christ wasn’t a woman, she responds: Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman. Man had nothing to do with him.

The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive spoke through a black, formerly enslaved woman to proclaim loud and clear that all God’s children have value and worth. By her openness to the Spirit working in her, Sojourner Truth challenged those with power and privilege to create spaces where the dignity of every human being could be respected. As she once said to the crowd: If my cup will hold but a pint, and yours will hold a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure fool?

We shouldn’t know her name. The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive found a way so that we do. Sojourner Truth was a powerful advocate and abolitionist. Her strength, wisdom, and perseverance were not missed even in her day as she was given the opportunity to meet

President Abraham Lincoln. She continues to inspire hope and possibility leading to the NASA Mars probe being named 'Sojourner'.

Sojourner Truth is the Hazardous Saint that reminds us to pay attention to those the world may otherwise marginalise and ignore. God's gifts are given to all. When we open ourselves to listen and create spaces for sharing, we find we are blessed.

In our desire to continually listen to and learn from the diversity of God's beloved children, let us pray as we sing: (SNC) 58 Mothering God