

## **Sermon National Indigenous Day of Prayer – June 21/23**

### ***Readings***

#### **Isaiah 40:25-31 NRSV**

- <sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
- <sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?  
He who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name;  
because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.
- <sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my God”?
- <sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.
- <sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.
- <sup>30</sup> Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;
- <sup>31</sup> but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint. <sup>1</sup>

#### **Psalm 19**

#### **Philippians 4:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Is 40:25–31.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. <sup>i</sup>

### **John 1:1-18**

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. <sup>ii</sup>

### **Sermon: By Archbishop Christopher Harper – June 2023**

***"but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. "***

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be forever acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer. Amen

Greetings to all of you, my Relatives in faith. I am honored to be with you in this moment to offer this sermon for National Indigenous Day of Prayer 2023. My name is Christopher Harper, I am the National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop and the Presiding Elder for the Sacred Circle and A.C.I.P. (The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples).

Today I greet you with words of peace and invitation, in prayer that we might walk together in this moment of time, to acknowledge *the* day appointed by the church as 'National Indigenous day of Prayer'.

As children of faith, we together have much to lift up in prayers of thanksgiving, especially when we acknowledge that the Creator God has blessed us all more than we could ever imagine or ever see, and we bless God because God is faithful to us always. Prayers are in themselves blessings, for through the power of prayer we connect or commune with the Creator in intimate words that come right from the heart and in that personal and intimate place of need and

uncertainty. Prayers of themselves need not be just ornate or scripted, but instead open communication with the Almighty one, through simple... 'Words.'

In my personal timeline I have found words to be wondrous, complicated, confusing and at times... troublesome, words are always dependent on context and locality, without these they are weak. Words received in one place as a message of peace, may be threatening in another place. Words can build up and words can destroy, words can be filled with blessing and hope, or empty and weighted for distraction. Words also can never be taken back, they are forever.

The Gospel message of todays appointing, speaks of St. Johns proclamation of the Word sent of God. This very offering of the Almighty is revealed through these amazing words...

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

In this statement, we hear that the Word was there in the very beginning and it stood with the Creator, it was powerful, creative and life bringing. The Word was true and filled with the Creators light, that light went out into all creation. Powerful words welcoming us into the proclamation of St. John who used his words to witness to us now in this moment of hearing, the revealing of the true Word, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As Indigenous Christians we know by the light of truth, the Word, who is given a name in these words: 'Creator Sets Free.' The Word carries these special descriptors, because Jesus (Creator Sets Free) can free all from their burdens and free them from following the wrong path by the truth of the Creators light.

So, as I said previously, words can become wondrous, complicated, confusing and at times... troublesome, so let me offer to all of you my relatives, another Gospel reading of the Gospel of St. John from the First Nations Version.

**<sup>1-2</sup>Long ago, in the time before all days, before the creation of all things, the one who is known as the Word was there face to face with the Great Spirit. This Word fully represents Creator and shows us who he is and what he is like. He has always been there from the beginning, for the Word and Creator are one and the same. <sup>3</sup>Through the Word all things came into being, and not one thing exists that he did not create.**

**<sup>4</sup>Creator's life shined out from the Word, giving light to all human beings. This is the true Light that comes to all the peoples of the world and shines on everyone. <sup>5</sup>The Light shines into the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it or put it out. <sup>iii</sup>FNV – St. John1:1-5**

Don't you just love it when words come together to make sense and reveal that which was always hidden beneath... words. For through this reading we hear how the Word: Creator Sets Free was, is and forever will be; and that all Creation was brought into being through the power of the Word. Sometimes we have to admit that we get lost in translations and that the only true translation is the one that works for us, that we can understand enough to use our own words to testify to the essence of the message before us. The message we understand and proclaim is our offering to the ages to follow, our children and grandchildren and onward. So what is our message of today, our churches message of Jesus Christ, The Word, Our Creator Sets Free, is it enough and clear and revealing, or is it cryptic and obtuse enough to lose the best of listeners and observers? The challenge of todays ministry is to be what we were called to be in Christ; Revealers of the Word in thought word and deed, loving and forgiving, healers and peace bringers, Community

builders, truth tellers and individuals living out the greatest of sermons for all the world to see to the glory of God Almighty, our Creator. The Word and message is given and offered in many forms and places, through what we name as Christians, churches and communities, and their word offerings are lifted up are forever, in the one who is forever... Jesus the Christ.

Indigenous Anglican delegates gathered in Ontario on the end of May to the beginning of June, at what we called Sacred Circle 2023. There we offered up the words of the Elders and wonderfully articulate leaders previous, who gathered words into a message what we collectively poured over and agreed upon, entitled 'Our Way of Life' and the 'Indigenous Covenant'. A historical collection of words that set the foundation of beginning policies and procedures, descriptors and guidelines for the Indigenous Ministry going ahead. These words will be a collective historical document, foundational and a living document of faith and identity for the Indigenous Anglicans from coast to coast to coast, the east, the west and to the north. These documents, these gathered words, were ratified and signed forward by the delegates of Sacred Circle, and these words will be presented to General Synod 2023 at the end of June for the Anglican Churches acknowledgement... not for its permission, but for the churches acknowledgement that in these words we proclaim our place and voice in the church and through our ministry, we offer our hand to walk forward united as one in the Word, building on the eternal Word of peace and hope. We the Indigenous Church offer our hand and message to all that we might come together in healing, understanding, reconciliation. The Indigenous Church has much to offer back to the wider church, but we must do it through our own words and identity. We are all in need of healing and we invite the church to be on the healing journey together with us; we are all in need of reconciliation, and reconciliation needs us to come to the table of humility, respect, honor, truth telling and listening with understanding. More words offered to describe what we were truly called to be in Christ.

As with all shared journeys it begins with an individual step forward, humility asks gently that we see that none of us is perfect and that we will all make mistakes, mistakes great and small, but we must all forgive as we ask to be forgiven, so as we journey together in faith and life maybe we together can say a small prayer each and every morning for each other and maybe for ourselves... by saying as you swing your legs over the edge of the bed, **"Lord help me to be and do better today, than I was and did yesterday and the day before. Amen"** A small prayer of humility, and honor to the one who can bring light into our darkness and whom opens the path of the good road to us.

The essence in words of the Gospel of St. John is to reveal the Word who is the Christ. The message concludes with the words that this message is true and honest. This message, these words have been passed down through the ages to us now in this hearing today. The message that the true Word of God is forever... and this is and always should be our testimony and witness for the church of today and for our church of tomorrow, as is revealed in our shared ministry going forward in truth, reconciliation and healing.

I close this short message today with the words that we need each other in prayer and ministry. Our failings and our weaknesses should not and will not be our epitaph, our word and deeds will not be empty, but our ministry and prayers of thanksgiving will rise like sweet smoke of incense and the smudge, and they collectively will be lifted up on eagles' wings like the Indigenous symbolic lifting of the eagle feather for all to see and to the glory of the Word, our Saviour, Creator and Almighty. Amen

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<sup>i</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Php 4:4–9.

<sup>ii</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Jn 1:1–18.

<sup>iii</sup> [\*First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2021), Jn 1:1–5.