



SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2019

The Sunday following the 2019 ELCIC National Convention

Luke 10: 25-37

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I greet you this morning on behalf of your sisters and brothers and siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast that make us this part of the family of God that we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Today's gospel is a very well known and well loved passage of scripture. It is used to illustrate the greatest commandment—to love God with all your being and to love your neighbour as yourself. It answers the question “who is my neighbour” by demonstrating that the neighbour is the one to provide kindness and assistance to anyone who is in need. It's a text about justice and compassion. It's a text about reconciliation.

Elected delegates from across our church have just gathered to meet and discuss this very thing. The theme of our National Convention was *Called to Journey Together: The Ministry of Reconciliation*. The theme is based on a passage from 2 Corinthians 5:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

We spent time together exploring the theme in three directions: our need, in the face of climate crisis, to be reconciled to creation, our desire, in the face of increased intolerance, to strengthen relations with people of other religions, and our commitment to continue to journey on the path of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

There is a lot of talk about reconciliation in our church and in our country, but what does it really mean? The classical theological understanding about reconciliation is about restoring our relationship with God, a relationship broken through sin. But our gospel this morning indicates that God is not only interested in our reconciliation with God, but also our reconciliation with others.

Some would say the ministry of reconciliation is best exemplified in our liturgy of confession and forgiveness, where we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. That we have not loved God with our whole heart and our neighbour, including creation, as ourselves. We ask God to forgive us, renew us and lead us so that we may delight in God's will and walk in God's way.



SUNDAY, July 14, 2019



It's this last part I want to underline, the recognition that we need a change of heart so that we might also change the way we live.

True reconciliation is far more than pious words on a Sunday morning. Reconciliation has elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love. Reconciliation is about the restoration of relationship.

Let me focus on reconciliation in Canada between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Thanks to the good work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, many more Canadians know about the truth of the Indian Residential Schools system, the ongoing intergenerational trauma, the injustice of the 60's scoop, the ongoing outrage of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the number of boil water advisories on reservations, the chronic underfunding of indigenous schooling and social services, the far too high representation of Indigenous people in prisons and so on. But there are people who still need to learn the truth. We need to be committed to ongoing learning and truth-telling as part of our commitment to reconciliation.

Once we know the truth, we have a responsibility to work for justice. Part of that is advocating with governments to make sure there is funding and commitment to provide safe drinking water, fund indigenous education and social services at the same level as across the country. Part of that is standing up to racism, calling our stereotypes, respecting treaties and territory.

Once we own up to the truth and work for justice then it is possible to work for forgiveness and healing and love. These things cannot be demanded and we settlers will need to be patient and understanding as individuals and communities go through their own process and timing for healing.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that reconciliation takes time. It's an ongoing process, not a one time event.

Reconciliation between settlers and indigenous peoples is an incredibly important focus for us as Christians and Canadians. But it is not the only kind of reconciliation we need to focus on.

The way we reconcile with creation in the face of the climate crisis requires truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and love.



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CALLED TO JOURNEY TOGETHER:
The Ministry of Reconciliation

The way we respond to increasing tension with new immigrants, people of other races or religions, require truth , justice, forgiveness, healing and love.

The way we reconcile with the LGBTQ2SIA+ community requires truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and love.

In our church we are not free of the need for reconciliation. We are people and we have said and done things that have caused rifts and divisions. We probably all know individuals who have left our congregations over some dispute. We many have members of our own families who are part of other Lutheran churches, other denominations or other faiths.

Where in your own life, in your own personal relationships with family or friends or neighbours or co-workers do you need to work for reconciliation? How might God be calling you to truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and love?

Reconciliation is not easy. It requires individual and corporate self-examination that is not easy. It requires a change of heart that leads to a change of action. The good news is that these are spiritual gifts given to us as disciples to practice and get better at. They are like muscles that we can use and strengthen.

Christ calls us to follow, and sends us the Holy spirit to equip and guide us more and more into God's ways of peace and justice and reconciliation.

So go out, love your neighbours, and work for reconciliation in Jesus' name. *Amen.*