

## Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost October 5, 2025: Luke 17:5-10

Jesus speaks to those who seek to live in a good way and to take one step after another on a journey of faith, fueled by the generosity and lovingkindness of the Creator of the Universe. After Jesus tells a powerful story about how those who suffer tremendous anguish and struggle with incredible poverty, he takes questions.

In the First Nations Version of the New Testament, names are significant. Jesus is known as Creator Sets Free and often addressed as the One who keeps the Wisdom of the Universe while those who seek to develop relationships with Jesus are known as those who bear message. Among Indigenous Peoples, names hold key identifiers about the purpose of that Being in a universe among a large network of interconnected Living Beings. Since about 80% of words are verbs in Indigenous languages, it is not surprising that words describe actions which point to the nature and purposes incorporated in that Indigenous word and identify sets of relationships between living Beings. In English, words are much less complex.

### What catches my attention in this good news story?

The follower of Creator Sets Free Jesus...the person who bears a message from the Creator/Divine Mystery...this Human Being asks for help about how to apply this teaching by Creator Sets Free Jesus in everyday life, **“Wisdomkeeper, help our weak faith!”** Luke 17: 5.

The One who keeps the Wisdom of the Universe answers with a cryptic illustration. “If you had faith as small as a mustard seed then something remarkable would happen. You could tell a mulberry tree to leap out of the earth, shake off the soil from her roots, and be planted in the ocean!”

An adult might find this answer generates a certain level of frustration and maybe even some anger since the response does not provide an easy answer.

A child may laugh and wonder about how this could happen.

Responding to the silence, Creator Sets Free Jesus sets out a common scenario and asks a second question about what his follower might reasonably expect in this circumstance.

What would be expected of an Elder who sends a young adult out to hunt for a deer and be rewarded by the gift of a life freely given by the deer? In returning to the Elder with this gift, the hunter would be expected to complete the second part of what the Elder expected. This is not an egalitarian division of labor in which the Elder asks for meat to be found and brought home so that the Elder can prepare a meal for the household. Instead, the Elder asks for meat to be found and expects the Hunter to remove the deerskin along with the hooves and any horns, bleed the animal, remove the organs, and then roast the meat for the common meal. For Indigenous Peoples, the Elder also expects that an offering is given to Creator upon arrival on the hunting grounds and at the place where this gift by this deer is given. Through generations of Ancestors, teachings about ceremonies and prayers when making these offerings for all of these gifts of life provided Creator would have been faithfully imparted by Elders and Knowledge Keepers to the children and youth.

What does it mean then to have even the smallest amount of faith?

How can the great chasm between the Creator of the Universe and you or I as Human Beings be bridged?

How can the walls which become thicker and more solid be broken down between those who accumulate a great deal of wealth and those who struggle to be fed, to drink safe and clean water, to be clothed and protected from the elements, and to have adequate shelter for their family members and others who share this shelter...how can these walls be broken down?

How can we open our hearts and minds to accept even a small seed of trust in the Creator of the Universe to grow within ourselves, our families, our worshipping communities, and our world?

### What is God saying to us in this good news story?

Human Beings have been created out of the dust of the universe, bearing the image of the Source of All Life and Love. In this way, you and I are connected to every part of Creator's creation. Since the Creator of the Universe lives and continues to create new life, then a part of each of us longs to live in the beauty and harmony found in an ongoing and life-giving relationship with the One who provides for all of our needs each and every day.

## **Rev. David Franks' Reflection with some substance from the 17th Sunday after Pentecost**

As Creator Sets Free Jesus teaches his message carriers, even a tiny bit of trust in the generosity and compassion of the Creator of the Universe/Divine Mystery/Great Spirit gives us the means to create and bring new life into being too. As the last of the Beings to be created, Human Beings depend on a host of Teachers who show us the truth and help us to walk in a good way upon Mother Earth.

The Anishinaabe tell a story about where Human Beings can find the Truth of our existence and our purpose in the universe. Richard Wagamese tells this story in this way, with some adaptations for this generation.

In the beginning, before time, Creator called a meeting of the animals and plant Peoples. The Creator told the animal and plant people about plans to send a new creature to live among them. These new creatures were to be called Human Beings, and these creatures were to be their kin.

The Creator told the animal and plant Peoples that this new creation would inhabit every corner of the world. Human Beings would create marvelous objects, communities, and works of art. Human Beings would also be born with questions and a drive to find answers to these questions.

Unlike animal and plant Peoples, Human Beings would be born without the knowledge of their spiritual identity so Creator told the animal and plant Nations that Human Beings were going to be sent into the world with one especially marvelous gift...the gift of knowledge and truth. With this gift, every Human Being would be called to find his or her individual spiritual identity. Creator went on to explain to the animal and plant Nations that in order for these new creatures to fully appreciate the wonder of this gift, Human Beings would need to search for their spiritual identity.

Creator wanted to hide this gift of knowledge and truth in such a place that Human Beings would have to discover this gift through a challenging search. So, Creator asked the animal and plant Nations to make suggestions about where to place this marvelous gift.

Salmon spoke and offered to take this gift and put it in the deepest part of the deepest ocean. Creator replied to Salmon saying that someday Human Beings would visit that place.

Buffalo spoke and offered to carry this gift to the very middle of the great plains on Turtle Island. Creator told Buffalo that Human Beings would inhabit the entire planet and would find this gift too easily.

White Pine spoke and offered to place this marvelous gift deep into the soil. Creator explained that Human Beings would dig into the earth and rock wherever rich treasures could be found.

Eagle spoke and offered with powerful wings to fly this gift to Grandmother Moon. Creator turned down this suggestion as well, pointing out that Human Beings would travel there too.

One by one, the animal and plant Nations made suggestions. No one seemed to come up with a remote place to hide the gift of knowledge and truth.

Finally, little Mole raised their voice and told Creator that there was a perfect place to hide this marvelous gift, "Put this gift of knowledge and truth inside Human Beings so that those with wisdom and a good heart will have the courage to look within themselves for the knowledge to live and to walk in a good way."

The cultural heritage and spiritual practices of Indigenous Peoples help us as Settler descendants to find this gift from the Creator of the Universe...the Source of All Life and Love. Out of the abundance of God's love for all of creation, Human Being can find the seed of faith within our own selves and within each other.

### **What is God calling us to be and do?**

It is fascinating reading the Greek Scriptures from the First Nations Version of the New Testament and gaining another perspective on these teachings. Using Eurocentric translations for this gospel reading leads one to speculate about doing one's duty within an existing social, economic, and political structure where the Master of the Household rightly and justly expects that food be obtained and meals would be prepared for himself and his family members by those hired to do their jobs and by servants of the household, some of whom could be slaves. For those seeking to follow Jesus, the primary message would be not to mix politics and religion. However, the First Nations Version is not sidetracked by this approach to ministry in maintaining the status quo. Instead, the First Nations Version reminds Indigenous members of various Peoples to live into the individuals whom Creator intends them to be. Among Indigenous Peoples, Spirit Names are given by their Elders, giving each individual a lifetime to grow into this Spirit Name and accomplish the purposes and responsibilities given to them by Creator.

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During the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation remembrance on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, a residential school survivor spoke about arriving at residential school at the age of 12 years and being fully fluent in his People's language. He did not know how to speak English or French. However, at residential school he was not allowed to speak the language of his People. He was also given an English name. When he tried to say this new name, he could not pronounce his name in English, so the other residents and teachers laughed at him. This name was strange to him and decades later continues to be strange to him. Elders had given him his Spirit Name. Everyone who loved him and knew him called him by his Spirit Name. Now, when he introduces himself as a residential school survivor, he chuckles as people attempt to say his Algonkian Anishinaabe name.

In this good news story, Creator Sets Free Jesus teaches us to look for that seed of faith in ourselves, in others, and in our everyday circumstances. It takes some effort on our part. We remember how Creator/Divine Mystery has been present to us in the past. We open ourselves to re-experience how new life comes into being amid ordinary experiences in day-to-day life. We catch a glimpse of our unique purpose in the few days which have been given to us in this creation. We grow into the name which we have been given by the Source of All Life and Love. You and I have been entrusted to accomplish the purposes which the Creator of the Universe has given us. Give thanks that we can accomplish much more than we can ask or imagine as we live into the Name by which the Creator of the Universe...the Source of All Life and Love...calls us.

In this generation, Indigenous Peoples also offer descendants of Settlers and Newcomers some understanding of their language, bits of cultural knowledge, and the importance of their spiritual practices to help Human Beings work together to care for this planet. All of creation speaks to Human Beings and these Teachers show us the way forward so that our children's children and their descendants have a safe place to live and flourish as Human Beings together.