

Who is my neighbour? The Body of the Cosmic Christ July 13 2025

Deuteronomy 26:1-2 (abridged), 4-8, 9c, 10acd-11; 30:10-14; Psalm 15; Colossians 1:15-20; Luke 10:25-37

As I grow in my awareness of nature through reading Robin Wall-Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* and by taking part in 3 forest walks with Lethbridge forest therapy guide, Trevor Potter, I have come to meet several trees by name, the first being Fergus on the 1st anniversary of my ordination to priesthood. There is a growing respect in me for the agency of trees – their ability to communicate with their roots, leaves, pollen and trunk. They hold an ancient wisdom and they communicate through their tree spirits with people spirits, too.

When I heard today, in the second reading from the letter to the Colossians that Christ is in all and *has* been there from before Creation came to be, I began to wonder whether this scripture has implications for who is our neighbour? Jesus' parable in the gospel points out to this lawyer, a person who is keen to spar with ideas and words, that the meaning of the law is not only about rules regarding who is in and who is out. Jesus' parable could expand the lawyer's world. He encourages him to break out of those limitations he's learned through his education in the law and the cultural norms of the time in which he should against Samaritans.

The first reading speaks of the law written on our hearts – that we don't need it memorized, recited every day from our heads, if we listen with the ear of the heart, as St. Benedict said, we listen with compassion. The challenge is to see yourself in the other and love, even when that one rubs you the wrong way. That way, and I quote, "All that was, and is, and shall be, - all will be reconciled."

When the lawyer comes to Jesus to test him, he wants to outwit him, to use his cleverness and intelligence to prove him wrong and shame him. However, Jesus is about bringing them together, meeting at the heart. And so, the story of the Good Samaritan unfolds. The person who was beaten and robbed was of the same persuasion as the lawyer. They would be horrified if a Samaritan touched them. At this point the victim of the robbery and beating is not conscious, their body is unable to resist and so, they receive care from the enemy whose understanding of the law is so different. Laws created to keep them separated have been overcome by the Samaritan's compassion.

Perhaps we too can stretch our concept of neighbour to include all of Creation. We are compassionate with our family members, we are compassionate to the one beaten and fallen by the roadside, or in war and the environmental crises of floods, but can we also feel compassion for the forests burning, the animals caught there, the waters polluted. Can we shift our ways of seeing water as a tool, or dispensable or recreational rather than sacred? In the book study *Wînipêk*, we learned of the horrible sewage and fertilizer pollution in lake Winnipeg right now. Can we listen for water's ancient voice, sense her being victim to greed, beaten and robbed at the side of the road?

And if so, how do we reach out? Here is one suggestion for our daily living

Open the Windows by Steve Garnass-Holmes

Love, open me to this day.

This is a day.

I need no words or categories—
rain or sun, clouds or wind—
only to see it, to feel it.

I want only to be open to this day, this moment.

I release all desire and attachment
to it being otherwise, to being elsewhere.

Open the windows of my heart
and throw back the curtains

to let this day in.
To notice and receive.
To be in this day,
shields down,
eyes open,
hands ready to be yours.
Love, open me.