

Hi,

my name is Ray Aldred and I am the director of the Indigenous Studies program at the Vancouver School of Theology.

I'm sitting in my office.

My office sits upon the ancestral traditional unceded territory of the Musqueam people, the Squamish people, and Tsleil-Waututh.

I'm a guest here.

I'm originally from.

I grew up around grande prairie Alberta.

My mother was born on the territory of Swan River Band up by Lesser Slave Lake in Northern Alberta.

My wife and I are living in Richmond British Columbia,

trying to live in a good way upon this territory where the Creator has brought us to.

And I thank you for the opportunity to share this reflection with you.

The bishop asked if I would record and record a sermon and I'm happy to do so.

This sermon or reflection is happening close to June 21st National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada,

June 21 was supposed to be a recognition of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Reading from the Government of Canada's website,

June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day.

This is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse culture and outstanding contribution of First Nations

Inuit and Métis people.

The Canadian constitution recognizes these three groups as aboriginal people.

Also known as indigenous people.

National Aboriginal Day.

Now Indigenous Peoples Day was announced in 1996

and through the Proclamation declaring June 21 of each day as National Aboriginal Day,

1982.

The National Indigenous Brotherhood.

Now the assembly of first nations called for the creation of this day

In 1995,

the Sacred Assembly,

which I was I was at I went to the Sacred Assembly,

I was there.

The Sacred Assembly called for indigenous and non indigenous people for a national holiday to celebrate the contributions of indigenous people in 1995.

Also the Royal Commission on Indigenous People recognize, recommended the designation of a National First People's Day.

And so it was created and on June 21,

2017,

the name was changed the National Indigenous Day.

All of these efforts were an attempt to try to shift.

I think the narrative that Canada had used about indigenous people.

Canada's narrative about indigenous people tended to paint us as a problem to be solved.

And I think that the creation of National Indigenous Peoples Day was an attempt

to try to shift the narrative to help

Canadians understand that Canada exists because of the goodwill of indigenous people,

because our ancestors made treaty to try to live together in the land as relatives.

Indigenous people have done their part and continue to do their part to call Canada to live in an honorable

way in the land,

to pursue reconciliation as an attempt

to heal and restore the harmony that we see all

around us in the good world where we find ourselves.

I see the good world because

the Cree way of looking at all things begins with the understanding that it's a good world.

It's a good world.

This expression however,

raises questions for people,

especially during this time

someone struggling with mental illness.

My question whether or not it was really a good world.

If we look at the world that we've been traveling through for the last couple of years, we may question whether it's a good world.

We've just started coming out of the pandemic.

The pandemic which revealed our frailty as human beings

and people questioned if it was a good world,

The finding of unmarked graves,

that former Indian residential schools has wiped away much of the Peacekeeper myth that Canada had clung to.

We are remembering National Indigenous Day this week,

but the unmarked graves reveal the

generational trauma that has existed among

Indigenous people.

The unmarked graves seem to wake up many non-Indigenous

people for a minute and in light of

this,

then he asked,

how is it a good world?

The wars and rumors of wars continue.

Afghanistan is once more under the domination of the Taliban.

Russian Russia continues to occupy parts of either Ukraine and attack to try to occupy even more parts in all of these things.

We wonder can we still wake up in the morning and say it's a good world.

I think that if we're willing to be taught by an indigenous way of looking at things,

we can still see the hope that every day brings in a world and upon the land where we find ourselves hope pounded not in some new technique or technology.

Hope that does not rest within some new political organization or structure.

Is it a it is a hope that springs from the creator of a good world who continues to create and recreate even in the midst difficult things.

My reflection on the passages of scripture that we've read today, it's all about a good creator of a good world, leading to renewal in a passage we read from the Hebrew scripture.

Isaiah 45 25 - 31.

I like the first verses,

particularly to whom then while we compare, Will you compare me that I should be like him, says the Holy one,

lift up your eyes on high and see who created these, the Hebrew scripture reading from the prophet Isaiah answers through prophetic poetry.

That question of that day and the question the world has today, which God is the true God.

The answer for Israel and for the indigenous nations has always been the true god is the God who made everything,

the God who made everything is the one who sustains all of creation.

When early missionaries came to Canada, they wrote that indigenous people that they encountered, we're not idolatrous.

This was a surprise to the missionaries, idolatrous was a term that the missionaries, Western missionaries used to apply to all kinds of people, but when they came to north America, they said the indigenous people there.

They recognize that there's just one God.

Indigenous people understood that creator had put us into land and it's a good land.

We see the creator the great,

the great mystery has given us our mother the
earth to care for us.
We belong to the land.

Grand Chief of Treaty eight told me,
I'm talking about how the West was always trying to own the land.
He said you can only possess what you can carry on your back.
That is why we cannot own the land.
The world belongs to the creator.
If you would observe creation,
Isaiah points out,
you would understand the harmony that the creator has put into creation.
The creator has created a world that cares for us,
but it is always the creator that is sustaining the good world.
The good world reminds us that there is a good creator,
great mystery catholic priest Roger Vander
steen,
who ministered in wa baska near where my great grandfather was from,
pointed out that for the cree,
they understood that it was their world and it was a good world where the creator had put
them.

Consequently,
he writes,
they don't ask if something was good or bad,
rather they just lived because it was their world.
What I take that to mean is that we understand that we are connected to all
things and the creator has ordered all things for life.

It is a good world provided by a good creator.
When difficult things happen,
you work through them because the creator who made everything gives the wisdom to
work through them,
Isaiah points out that the God who made everything is the true
God,
the one can under and one can understand this.
If they look at creation,
indigenous people observed the glory of God and began
each day with thanksgiving.
It's a good world and we give thanks sort of like
origin wrote that if you look at creation,
you can see the glory of God.
Indigenous people could see the glory of the creator and creation
that they let.

Yet they understand that difficult things do come
and our next passage gives us understanding of how we live in a world where things when things
go wrong,

even in a good world and if
we believe and the good creator
and we trust in the good creator who made a good creation.
The passage in Isaiah says,
we will be renewed and mount up with wings like
eagles.
When the Europeans came to Canada.

Our next passage Psalm 19 talks about a law flowing from
creation.

When the Europeans came to Canada,
they had a serious superiority complex,
not everyone,
but philosophically Europe and its kingdoms believed
because they were Christian or because they had a superior mind,
they were destined to rule the world.
The papal bulls,
which amount to the doctrine of discovery,
made this plan.
There were philosophers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes for example,
who in their mind,
the state of nature was wild and needed to be tamed.
It was concluded by European nations that indigenous people were needing to be
civilized and taught the law because they had none.
This was a basic tenant of Europeans as they were spreading their
civilization.
They believed that where they were going,
the people there were uncivilized and in need of training and in need
of law,
primitive people who they for in which is how they
referred to indigenous people working.
They were considered by the Europeans to have no law,
no courts.

This would lead Anglican missionary,
John West 1st missionary in Western Canada to
state that the job of the missionary was to cultivate the
wildlands by converting the wild people
or heathen John A. Macdonald believed that
the problem with indigenous people was a moral problem.
There.

There it is again that idea that morally Europeans were superior
and so needed to this,
they needed to improve indigenous people.
This was the thinking behind the residential school to provide moral training.
All of this flowed out of the idea that indigenous people had no law.
Indigenous people however,
would resonate with the psalmist in Psalm 19 that when you look at

creation,
you see the glory of God.
Creation itself speaks or proclaims the glory of God and it does
it without a human voice and creation.
If you observe,
it reminds us that we are in need of a law,
the law of the creator that he has given to us.
Indigenous elders have taught me a couple of things that I see reflected in Psalm
19 first that indigenous law flows from
creation.

One elder told me that he understood that their law came from the creator through
creation,
John borrows an expert on indigenous law,
and Canadian law,
points out that Indigenous law flows from creation stories.
The creation stories teach us the importance of harmony,
but we are human and we need to learn how to live in harmony.
The psalmist points out the lock and keep our way pure indigenous
people taught me that whereas the animals all know how to live by
instinct,
the responsibility of human beings,
because we have the gift of freedom.
We must learn how to live in harmony,
Learning how to live in harmony comes from observing creation
and the law that flows from creation that is holding creation
together.
Indigenous law teaches us that we must live in good relationship with all
things.
This is what we see in our good world that is all around us.
We how we however are small and so creator has given
us ceremony to help us understand and have strength to
live out this harmony.
We are rebuilding our ceremonial world and that is the quest
or task or journey of reconciliation,
It flows from indigenous law that we see flowing from creation,
but we understand that it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ that in
Jesus Christ creator and creation come into perfect harmony
and that Jesus Christ is not only the mediator between
human beings and the creator but also between human beings
and creation and human beings and one another,

I want to turn now to the passage in Philippians which talks about
rejoicing and thinking about good things and I will
come to learn from indigenous people from my
indigenous people,
but the best way to do that is to head out on the land and remember it's a good
world,

The epistle commands us to rejoice and think about good things
and as I read it,
I was struck by the last part to practice these things.
You see the land will heal us,
it's a good land and we need to get out there and feel the earth welcome
us to remember that we are created by the one who cares about us
and it's a good world At the Heart of Priest Spirituality and
Treaty eight is in the fall we pray for good hunting
and in the spring you give thanks for good hunting.
People always ask how do you know it was good hunting.
Well I always think where I grew up On the day that I was born,
it was -40° and if you're still alive in the spring it was good hunting,
it's a good world and sometimes we get caught in thinking that once
we take care of that difficulty or once we take care of this other
difficulty then maybe our life will really start.
But the life we are living in the land is the one that we have,
life is a gift and we're always pushing to live out the
harmony that exists in creation all around us
and that we want to see between us and all of our relatives.
The Cree understood this reality.
Anishanobby teaching principle is to in the midst of difficulties to
pile the good on the bad until something good comes up as a solution.
When you face the challenges in life,
you need to remember that it's a good world.
You need to get out on the land and remember those things.

The Gospel passage today was from John 1 1 to 18,
John 1 1 to 18 contains sort of
the seeds of everything John will develop and the rest of his Gospel.
But I want to think about a couple of things.
The most complete revelation of God is the person of Jesus
Christ.
It is the word that has gone out from the creator that fills the earth and has
made all things in this world.
Word continues to echo with true spirituality or power,
not mere human words,
but the word of God fills the earth And makes up the
law that has gone out from the creator.
I saw him 19 says the word that
has come to recreate is the word that
created all things.
The word that has come to take in our Brokenness and begin to
adopt adopt us and take in the whole world
and overcome the darkness that has blinded people.
The gospel tells us the word is a light that shines in the darkness
and as the light shines it spreads healing and it restores
justice in the world,
justice meaning completeness or wholeness.

The word is a witness,
this word that came to John the baptizer that announces
the word coming into the world,
the light coming into the world,
John the baptizer is the paradigm or the of the
Hebrew prophets,
he spoke the word of God that came to him but he was only a witness,
Jesus Christ coming into the world is the word of God made
flesh.

Justin Martyr said literally in his
mind literally the Hebrew scriptures had taken on
flesh in the person of Jesus Christ there
is a word that has come into the world and
it's given us the opportunity it says to be for adoption or
recreation to be the Children of God becoming who we were
created to be.

That Paul would write in Romans eight that the world groans waiting
for the revealing of the Children of God like a woman in childbirth
and to those who believe who received them
will be given the right to become Children of
God

Children Children of God who are Children
that the world didn't choose that the
God shows And to those who believe would mount up with wings
like Eagles like it said in Isaiah 40
and we get to behold the glory,
Jesus Christ.

The word became flesh.

We get to see it in the Eucharist as creator and
creation come into perfect harmony,
that's the body and blood Christ are revealed
in the wine and the bread and the light shines in
the midst of the difficulties that we face and gives us hope.
Even as we continue to face the tough things around us,
the glory of His Grace upon

Grace has been made known by the second
act of Creation in the word becoming flesh,
we rejoice and we proclaim and practice this Gospel
which has created the world and now fills the whole world?

The word became flesh and it continues.

The word continues to go out into the whole world to recreate and
heal the world by bringing Grace.

It's a good world and we seek to join creator
as creation continues to be remade and transformed,
a transformation that includes us to be who we were created to
be.

In conclusion.

The third question of the Gospel based discipleship,
ask,
what is the gospel or Jesus telling you to do?
The word makes a claim on our lives.
The word is recreating and re-
creating the world.
The question goes out to you today,
who are you going to be because of the word that has gone out into all creation.
What are you gonna do?
Let us pray creator?
We give you thanks for all you are and all you bring to us for our
visit within your creation and Jesus in Jesus,
you place the Gospel in the center of this sacred circle through which all
creation is related.
You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life.
Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment as we grow
in your spirit for you,
our God,
now and forever.
Amen.