

National Indigenous Day of Prayer  
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St. John the Evangelist, Smiths Falls ~ June 21, 2020

In the Hebrew language, the term *dabar* means both “word” and “deed”. So in Hebrew...saying and doing are closely linked.

Preacher and author Frederick Buechner writes: “*Words are power...essentially the power of creation.*”<sup>1</sup> Words spoken lead to creation: the creation of conversation, beauty, relationship.

“*In the beginning was the Word,*” wrote John the Evangelist, that most mystical and poetic of all the evangelists. *In the beginning was the Word.*” Meaning before the beginning there was utter nothingness. And then there was *dabar* – the Word; the deed; the beginning of the beginning. God uttered the Word. And it created life.

This prologue to John is the Gospel for this National Indigenous Day of Prayer (or National Indigenous Peoples’ Day for those who don’t observe the Anglican Church Calendar). And so, perhaps we ought to pause and ask “Why this passage, for this day? What does this text say, or perhaps more importantly, what does this text *do*?”

Well, it introduces, right? This prologue to the Gospel. It introduces and orients us to the story of Jesus as told by John the Evangelist, and it grounds us, provides a perspective and a default position for the rest of the story. This prologue sets the tone and the direction for us.

Thinking about that, and how the story unfolds, is it any wonder that this *dabar*, this word, is one we need to hear on this day?

Before there was anything – before we had the animals, and humans, and sun and moon, the Creator spoke into being all that would be. Every living thing; every living creature; every nation; every people; the Creator spoke into being.

Before there was anything, there was the Creator’s son...the Word...Jesus. Or as some of our Indigenous kin call him, “*Creator Sets Free*”. Not “Creator sets us free,” but “*Creator Sets Free.*” Jesus, *Creator Sets Free*, was before there was anything else.

Which should give us pause on this National Indigenous Day of Prayer to ponder our relationship with Jesus – *Creator Sets Free*; our relationship with people of different races and cultures; with the Indigenous people of this land.

At our Diocesan Synod back in 2016, The Rev’d Norm Wesley told those who had gathered that the Creator had prepared his people for many generations long before European missionaries arrived, to receive the news about Jesus. In other words, the Gospel, was not the unique property of a medieval European church. The Gospel is the Word which was, in the beginning, with God the Creator; who was, in the beginning, God.

These weeks of anti-racism protests and pandemic tragedy, restrictions and loss have all shed a light onto the interconnectedness of creation and the nations of our world. This time has shed light on the darkness of our past and our present, where we have been complicit in valuing human lives differently, depending on their race, their age, their socio-economic level. “Where do the resources go in a time of crisis?” “Who is targeted unfairly by those looking to oppress the other?” “Who has rights? Who doesn’t?” “Who gets clean drinking water, equal access to health care, education, support in our nation?”

This morning, we stand on the cusp of a new day. We stand on the cusp of a new week. We stand on the cusp of a future that has not yet been written, or spoken. So perhaps, this prologue from John’s pen is an example for us, a call to us to write a prologue for our lives from this moment forward.

What will it say? What will this prologue *do*? What will this Word create in us?

We cannot say. But we can set the tone and the direction. And, in the words of Isaiah the prophet, if we wait for the Lord, and listen for *dabar* and that which it will create, we will mount up with wings like eagles, we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.