

September 12, 2021
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost / Proper 19

Meditation: “Knock, knock”

Did you hear about the minister who was doing some pastoral visiting in his charge? He arrived at the home of one member. The car was in the driveway, and he could hear the radio inside as he arrived at the front door. He rang the doorbell, and there was no answer. He knocked loudly on the door and called out, but still no answer. When he got back to his office, he sent a text to the congregant. It said, simply, “Revelation 3:20”

Almost immediately he got a reply. You are going to love this.... it’s so funny! The reply was “Genesis 3:10.” Isn’t that hilarious?

Oh! I’m guessing by your reaction, or lack thereof, that you don’t have the bible memorized, chapter and verse? Sorry about that.

Revelation 3:20 – Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Genesis 3:10 – I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And I’ll bet you thought I was going to tell a ‘knock-knock’ joke, didn’t you?

Okay, so it’s not exactly knocking at the door, and I can’t really say that it is wisdom, but there has been much crying out in the street and raising of voices in town squares this past year and a half. There have been shouts for racial equity and justice from the Black Lives Matter movement. There have been more cries, outrage, and heartbreak for racial equity and justice following the discoveries of unmarked graves at Residential School sites. There are cries for reconciliation between Indigenous and Settler peoples. There are cries for help for those who are homeless, marginally housed, or on the verge of homelessness. There are cries for help for those suffering and dying from the drug pandemic that is opioid addiction. There are cries of protest against lockdowns and vaccines and public health guidelines, like the wearing of masks, and now against vaccine passports or certificates. There are cries for help for those suffering from mental health issues, especially those exacerbated by a year and a half of social isolation. There are cries for help from those displaced by wildfire, flood, hurricane or tornado. There are cries for immediate radical change to help limit climate change.

That there are all these cries, for all these issues, is surely a sign that we, as a society, have not been paying attention to a great many things. Important things. It’s as though we thought if we just ignore it, it will go away. Or maybe we have just been too wrapped up in our own desires and problems. And the text today warns us

that complacency or apathy will eventually lead to disaster, as will distraction or self-absorption.

It dawns on me that all of the issues that I named are, one way or another, about relationship. Racial justice and reconciliation are about the relationship between groups of people. Pleas for help from those with addiction, or mental health, or housing issues is about the relationship between members of the community in which we live. The issue of mask wearing or vaccination is about our civic responsibility to those we live in community with, our relationship with our neighbours. The call to mitigate climate change is about our relationship to God's creation.

Maybe the real focus of wisdom is the focus on relationships: our relationship with God; our relationship with God's creation; our relationship with one another – whomever and wherever we are; and, ultimately, our relationship with life itself. And there is a funny thing about relationships – they are a two-way street.

The church that professes to be the Body of Christ exists, amongst other things, to transform life and lives, to live with respect in creation, to seek reconciliation between peoples, and to live in right relationships with one another. Another way of putting it is that the main focus of God's church is – relationships. From all of the crying going on in city streets and squares, there is no shortage of issues for the church to concern itself with.

We, as individuals or as communities of faith, cannot fix everything. On our own, we can't even fix one thing. And, that is no excuse not to try to do something to move things to a better place. Some, like Coleen Mason are walking to raise funds in the fight against multiple myeloma. In the October/November issue of Broadview, the church's magazine, is an article about the work that a number of churches are involved in - promoting safe-injection sites and a harm-reduction approach to people struggling with addictions. Harm-reduction is about treating addiction as health and humanitarian crises rather than as a criminal issue. The long-term goal is breaking the addiction and bringing the person to a place of healing – restoring them to a healthy and functioning relationship within the community. That only happens if the person is alive, and if there is a relationship of trust, which is what safe-injection sites are about. There's that pesky relationship word again. Once a relationship of trust is established, it is possible to work on health, including mental health, housing, employment, and other issues. The federal election gives each and every one of us the opportunity to ask the candidates where they and their parties stand on issues like racial justice and climate change.

I think wisdom is concerned with how we live together, in mutual aid, in justice, and in peace. Now all we have to do is, with God's help, heed the message. Is anybody home and listening?