

March 5, 2023
Second Sunday of Lent

Meditation: "Hear, hear"

Dunan McCue is an Anishinaabe man, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, which is located in Lake Simcoe. He is also a journalist with over two decades of experience in television and radio reporting. Currently he is the host of the CBC radio show *Helluva Story*, and also author of the recently published book *Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities*.

There is an interview of Duncan on pages 16-18 of the April/May edition of Broadview magazine.

Reading the interview, I learned that during his undergraduate days at the University of King's College in Halifax Duncan wrote for the student newspaper. The response to his very first article caused him to realize the power of journalism. Now, as a journalist he uses his voice to tell stories, stories that belong to real people, and the realization that how those stories are told can either do a great deal of harm, or a great deal of good.

Last week the gospel lesson was about the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. So often we focus on the divine nature of Jesus, and I wondered about his human nature. We've heard what it was like for people to be trapped in the rubble in Turkey for eleven and a half days recently and I wondered, what would it be like to be without food for forty days and nights? What effect would that have on the human body? This week we read about a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus was speaking. It dawned on me that only an embodied being could expel air across their vocal chords to make sound. Only a body of flesh and blood can speak. Here is another aspect of his humanity. Jesus spoke.

I searched the CBC website for episodes of *Helluva Story* and discovered a number of challenging stories. There was a story called *Invisible Histories* about who decides what history we learn. It focuses on the Black on the Prairie project which is working to get Black history taught in schools. There was another story called *Disability Poverty* which focused on how our societal view of poverty as a personal failure affects the programs and assistance available to those most in need. There was also a story about how to handle children in emotional distress in a school

setting called *Elementary Confinement*, a story about a harm reduction outreach group in Edmonton called *Unconditional Love*, and one about a road trip with a grandmother who was a residential school survivor to the school she attended, called *Road Trip with Kokum*. And, there were other equally challenging episodes. Duncan uses his storytelling gift to tell stories that we may not understand, that we may not want to hear, that we find disturbing or challenging.

Likewise, the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus was challenging for Nicodemus. He did not understand what Jesus was talking about. “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus kept talking, and Nicodemus kept failing to understand. He couldn’t catch the drift of what Jesus was trying to convey.

All of this talk of having a voice, and how Duncan uses his to give a voice to people who are voiceless in our society, and how Jesus used his to give voice to spiritual truths that baffle embodied people, got me to thinking about the other side of voice. Instead of the oral, what about the aural? What about the listening? Was Nicodemus really listening to what Jesus was saying?

And what about us? Whose voices do we listen to? Do we listen to Q Anon conspiracy theorists? Do we listen to our journalists? Do we listen to our politicians? Do we listen to the marketers who try to tell us that life will be better if we buy their product? Do we listen to social media to determine our self-worth? Do we listen to Jesus?

Does it matter who we listen to?

Why? (Depending on whose voice we listen to, we can create either heaven or hell on earth.)

Duncan has discovered that the very first step in telling the stories of others is to listen carefully and respectfully to the other as they tell their own story. Whose story was Jesus telling?

What was the story Jesus told? (the kingdom of God)

As surely as God spoke through Jesus, God continues to speak to us today, through the Spirit, the very breath of God. Are we listening?