

## ***Invited to Let Go***

A message shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

June 18, 2023

by Rev. Dave Le Grand

I imagine that most of us have experienced new beginnings in our lives, whether it is a new job, a new relationship, a new home, a new neighbour.<sup>1</sup> These new beginnings can be filled with joy and excitement. However, they are frequently accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. And so it is with the readings this morning.

Wisdom, discernment, and unsettling are all themes that the scripture reading particularly explores. I invite you to consider, what insights arise for you as you listen this morning?

Our gospel reading from Matthew is about a young man who comes to Jesus seeking the answer to how he might have “a perfect” and “eternal” life.

Jesus' instructions are pretty explicit: “Go and sell your possessions, give your money to those who are poor, and then come follow me.” In other words, to build a new life, this young man must give up what is familiar and comforting to him. My guess is, Jesus's answer “unsettled” him.

This new path means that the individual would need to *let go* of their current identity and wealth. The reading tells us that they walk away from Jesus grieving, having too many possessions. It appears that the lure of a new life was not enough compensation for the sacrifices that would be required.

Maybe this story, that rich character encountering Jesus, is a metaphor for us given our context, our story as The United Church of Canada. We are certainly in some “unsettling” and “interesting” times that involve letting go and opening up to new possibilities.

In 2022, the 44<sup>th</sup> General Council, the national denomination meeting of the United Church, came together to make some big decisions. There, the National Indigenous Council proposed that the church identify and remove all structural barriers that would prevent developing and sustaining an *autonomous* National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada. Wow. Talk about a call for change, and an invitation to let go!

When there is a request to change to the structure of the United Church that would require changing our Basis of Union, the very foundation of The United Church of Canada, a Remit is required. The General Council gathering in 2022 authorized a remit to test the will of the church on this requested change, which now means that every regional council and community of faith governing body must vote on it, including our St. Andrew's Council.

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If the remit is passed it will

- enable the Indigenous Church to determine its place and structure within the United Church, and
- enable the creation of an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada

Indigenous Peoples' rights to their own spiritual identities and to self-determination would be acknowledged by the passing of this Remit. It would also help The United Church of Canada to move forward on Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Like the privileged man of Matthew's story today, all sorts of new possibilities and opportunities are in front of us, that come with a sense of uncertainty, and likely leave us with questions.

I would like us to sit prayerfully with questions like:

- Are we willing to sacrifice what is familiar to us for the possibility of a new story?
- Are we prepared to create space and time for the Indigenous Church to discern their own story?
- Are we willing to dismantle the structure of the church as we know it and await the birthing of something new?
- What will that new structure look like?

Unlike the rich young man, we don't have Jesus telling us what our options are. The path to our new beginning is less obvious and a little less certain. Will we accept this invitation to a new life, or, will we be like the man who encountered Jesus, and walk away?

We need to seek wisdom and understanding. Maybe this is a *kairos* moment for us, in biblical terms, "kairos" being the Greek word in the Bible for "God's time," holy time, as opposed to the time as told by a clock – a time for us to contemplate and invite renewal not only for the Indigenous Church but for us as well.

Maybe this is the time for us to trust that there will be uncertainty, but, at the same time, collectively, we have faith that we can forge together a new future. Consider for a moment that we as a United Church of Canada proclaim to be committed to seek justice. Could this Remit be an invitation to live into that commitment?

Today on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, may we, collectively as a church, and each of us individually, dare, unlike the wealthy young man who encountered Jesus, to see this as God's moment, an invitation to Let Go – to choose the path of healing and love, not fear.

That sounds like something Jesus would say to us, something counterintuitive to what our world would tell us, to let go in order to gain a greater reward that is hard to measure. Whatever the future brings, may we welcome the promise of new possibilities and trust that Christ's Love is guiding, not fear. Love, not fear. Love, not fear. Amen.