

Black History Month—What Now?—Acts 2: 40-47

February 27, 2022- Transfiguration Sunday

(Note: Click on the icon below to watch a short video that was viewed prior to the reflection)



It was the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu who said new beginnings are often disguised as painful endings. Adele Halliday, the United Church's Anti-Racism and Equity Officer says Jesus' death was an ending of sorts. But our faith reminds us that Jesus' death was not a final ending at all—but rather a new beginning. Jesus' ministry began anew in a different way.¹ While the death of Jesus was certainly an end, it was also a beginning for that community of Jesus followers in Acts 2. The beginning of a journey with Jesus, of life in the Spirit. A community transformed in every way, spiritually, interpersonally, economically.

As Dominique Gilliard shares in his video, the gospel is not a get out of hell free card, it's an invitation to a journey. The journey with Jesus, is meant to impact all areas of our lives, re-orienting our priorities, transforming our relationships, influencing our politics and economics. We are called to go into the world as disciples who follow the example of Jesus in love, in action, in prayer, and in faithful service.²

Another Black History Month is ending, but instead of thinking “well we've done that for another year”, could it also be a beginning, the beginning of our re-commitment to Rev. Dr. King's beloved community? Adele Halliday says that endings and beginnings remind me her of covenants and covenantal relationships. A covenant is often described as an agreement between God and God's peoples. It's about promises made between people and God. In a covenant, there are mutual responsibilities that are grounded in relationship. Covenants too, can signal an ending—an ending of the way that things were before. It's an ending because people might agree to not do something. But it's a beginning—a new relationship. A new commitment. A change in ways and behaviour that are long lasting. A way of being guided by God to live and be different. An invitation for accountability to one's self, and to one another, and to God.³

It's like the covenant of marriage, the ceremony is often beautiful and there is a profound sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. But if it is to succeed that ceremony is only the beginning. The work is constant, but the fruit of that is an indescribable union where two become one.

¹ Adele Halliday, *40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism: Concluding the 40 Days*, https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2021-11/antiracism-40_day40.pdf.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9xWWqpBpxQ>.

³ Halliday.

As United Church Minister Rev. Paul Walfall says, “Right relations is about developing a relationship and you are always working on a relationship. Anybody who is in any type of relationship knows this. Particularly if you're in a marital or an intimate relationship, the moment you stop working on the relationship, the relationship is dead. So likewise, if we are seeking to be anti-racist, it's not about reaching a destination it's about constantly working on this relationship of seeing the image of God in everyone and working towards that.”⁴

We're not just checking off boxes with Black History Month. We're on a journey with God, we're growing more fully into the image of God in each of us and removing the blinders that keep us from seeing it in others. We are moving toward the beloved community at the heart of creation. The Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown-Douglas says more about this:



As Rev. Dr. Brown-Douglas says this work is really about salvation. The purpose of the religious life, of spirituality is to seek the truth about reality. Anti-racist work, building the beloved community saves us from falsehood and illusion and ground us in the truth that the image of God resides in each of us, in our neighbour, in creation itself. We are called to get on board with what God is doing. Even as we come to this ending let us begin or perhaps re-commit to this anti-racist journey with Jesus, the source of our salvation.

Rev. Joe Gaspar

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEpS8EgNv2A>.