

SERMON SUNDAY SEPT. 27 2026 - "TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION SUNDAY"

"Love as Foundation of Reconciliation" based on Matt. 5:1-11, 17-18

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Does love still is the foundation of our relationships with one another?

I know that in the church, in Bible studies, and even from this pulpit, we have heard about love many, many times. We hear Jesus and Paul say, "Love your neighbour." We also hear Paul speak about love as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). We even hear Jesus calling us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

We have heard about the invitation to love so often that they become very familiar to us. We know what the Bible says about love. We know that love is supposed to be at the centre of our Christian faith. And yet, when we look at our daily lives, we can also see how difficult it is to actually practice love. Because it is one thing to talk about love, and another thing to live it.

And perhaps the difficulty is not that we do not know what love means. Most of us know what love is supposed to look like. The real challenge comes when love is tested as we got hurt, disappointed, misunderstood, or faced with someone who is difficult to love.

Christian love, friends, does not mean that we ignore hurt, or pretend that everything is fine, or never disagree with one another. Rather, it means that even in our differences, disappointments, and broken relationships, we refuse to let hatred, resentment, or indifference have the final word.

Love asks us to see another person not simply as someone who has hurt us or disagrees with us, but as someone who is also created and loved by God.

And this week as part of PCC congregation, we are invited to observe a National Day of Truth and Reconciliation which celebrated on Sept 30th. This is a day that asks us to pause, to remember, and to listen. It invites us to remember the painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools, and to honour children who were taken from their families, communities, languages, and cultures for more than 150 years, from the early 1830s until the late 1990s in the history of Canada.

But truth and reconciliation are not simply about remembering something that happened in the past. It particularly invites us to ask how that history continues to shape our relationships today. What does it mean for us, as Christians and as a church, to seek reconciliation? And what does it mean to love our neighbours when there has been deep hurt and broken trust?

Perhaps this is where our reflection on love becomes especially important.

Reconciliation, sisters and brothers in Christ, cannot begin by simply saying, "Let us forget the past and move on." Because some of you know better than others that it is not easy to forget wrongdoings that someone did to us in the past. But, understanding and practicing love as a

foundation in reconciliation gives us the courage to remember honestly, to listen humbly, and to acknowledge the pain of others.

Sometimes loving our neighbour means giving up our need to defend ourselves and being willing to hear a story that is difficult for us to hear.

As a newcomer and new settler on this land, in the past five years I did learn a lot about the history of what happened when the initial settler came years ago into the Turtle Island, and some of it is difficult to hear. But as I'm still learning, I know for sure that the work of reconciliation is something we still need to do for a better relationship between indigenous people and non-indigenous in this land.

During one summer in Saskatchewan, I had the opportunity to join several pastors from churches in and around Regina, along with Indigenous friends and Elders, in cleaning an area where unmarked graves of children from a former residential school had been identified. That particular residential school was operated from 1899 to 1997, and in 2021 they discovered an estimated 751 unmarked burial sites at that particular location. Most of the individuals in these unmarked or abandoned burial sites were young students, who died far from their home communities. Most died from untreated diseases such as tuberculosis and influenza, as well as malnutrition, physical abuse, fires, and accidents due to the severe, unsanitary, and neglectful conditions inside the institutions.

On the day of work together that I attend, the work itself was very simple. We were cleaning the area, removing weeds and debris, and caring for a place that should never have been forgotten. It may have seemed like a small thing, but it was a powerful reminder that reconciliation is often lived through small acts of presence.

The pastors and I who were there that day were not personally responsible for the decisions or actions of people and churches in the past who agreed to take thousands of children away from their families and placed them in these schools. But as people who are part of the church today, we also cannot simply distance ourselves from the history of the church. We carry a responsibility to acknowledge the harm that was done, to listen to Indigenous peoples, and to walk humbly toward reconciliation with our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

And what touched my heart most happened after we finished the clean-up. Our Indigenous friends invited all of us to share a meal with them. And when I say "meal," I do not really mean just a meal. They prepared what I would call a 'feast' for us, with more than six different items from appetizer, main course, to dessert with one important rule: everything that had been prepared needed to be finished.

We sat together on the ground in a circle. I remember the conversation, the laughter, and the food being shared among us. And in that moment, I was reminded again that food can be a powerful expression of solidarity, hospitality, friendship, and love. We were no longer simply standing

together at a place marked by sorrow; we were sitting together in a circle, sharing a meal that our Indigenous friends had prepared and offered to us.

In their hospitality, I experienced something deeply meaningful. Their welcome felt like more than an acceptance of our apology. It was an act of generosity and love—an invitation to sit together, to share together, and perhaps, in some small way, to begin building a better relationship together.

That moment made me think about the kind of love Jesus calls us to practice. Love is not only something we say. Love is something we do, something we offer, and sometimes something we receive from another person.

Reconciliation, friends in Christ, is not built only through big statements or formal ceremonies. Sometimes it begins with showing up, listening to one another, working together, and eventually sitting together. The circle reminds me that we are not meant to remain strangers forever. We are invited to encounter one another as fellow human beings despite of our differences, to share what we have, and to make room for one another.

Perhaps, that is one of the challenges of our Christian calling today. If love is truly the foundation of our relationships, then love must also shape the way we remember our history. It must shape the way we listen to those whose experiences are different from ours. And it must shape the way we respond when we discover that the story we once knew was incomplete.

Love does not erase truth. Love gives us the courage to face the truth—and then, with humility, to ask: Where do we go from here?

Some of us have more powers than the others, some of us have some privilege without we knowing it, and some of us are able to make a difference to make the world we are living today a better place. As we recite in our Lord's Prayer, weekly or maybe daily, "... Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done." We also need to participate in 'bringing God's Kingdom' here through our thought, words, and deeds.

The Beatitudes, that also part of the readings this morning, in many ways, function as the opening announcement of Jesus' vision for the kingdom of heaven. Jesus here tells us what life looks like when God's kingdom begins to take root in this world. And surprisingly, the people Jesus calls "blessed" are not necessarily the people his listeners would expect.

Jesus does not begin by saying, "Blessed are the powerful," or "Blessed are the successful," or "Blessed are those who have everything figured out." Instead, He speaks about the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers.

In other words, here Jesus is turning our usual understanding of blessing upside down.

The Beatitudes give us a picture of the character of the kingdom that Jesus is announcing. Before Jesus tells his disciples what they should do, he first tells them what kind of people they are called to become.

And perhaps that is why these words have remained such a treasure for Christians and for humanity throughout the centuries. The Beatitudes are not simply a list of rules to follow. They are an invitation to see the world differently, to recognize where God is at work and to imagine what human life can look like under God's reign.

In our relationships with one another, I believe love needs to be the foundation.

Yes, conflict is unavoidable. But when we face conflict with honesty and grace, it can lead to deeper understanding and stronger relationships. And remember, conflict by itself, does not and will not bring healing. It is our willingness to seek reconciliation that can begin to restore what has been broken and to heal the wound after conflict.

And as we mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we are invited to ask ourselves: *What can I do? Whom do I need to listen to? And where might I need to take a step toward healing?* And beyond the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people, these reflection questions also applicable in every relationship we have with one another. *What can I do? Whom do I need to listen to? And where might I need to take a step toward healing?*

Reconciliation sometimes begins with listening, with learning, with acknowledging what we did not know, or simply with being willing to take one small step toward another person.

And this is where the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes become more than beautiful words. "Blessed are the merciful." "Blessed are the peacemakers."

These are not simply blessings we receive; they are also ways of life we are invited to practice. As followers of Christ, we are called to become people who make room for truth, extend mercy, seek peace, and choose love even when love is difficult.

So, friends, may we not only speak about love, but practice it.

May we not only remember, but listen.

May we not only acknowledge brokenness, but take steps toward reconciliation.

And may God give us the humility to listen, the courage to face the truth, and the love to walk together toward a future where our relationships are rooted in respect, peace, and love.

Amen.