

Lent 2 Sermon International Women's Day March 8, 2020

Scripture: John 4: 5-15

Sermon: #EachforEqual

This year, International Women's Day falls on a Sunday. It has been around in some form since 1909. Predominantly celebrated in Socialist and Communist countries until it was adopted by the Feminist movement and the United Nations in the 1970's. The annual commemorations vary. In some countries it is a public holiday, in others a day for protests and in some places it is ignored altogether. The hashtag title of the sermon is #EachforEqual.

On the front page of your worship sheet you'll find a young person striking the #EachforEqual pose. Below the picture is a rewording of the theme: "An equal world is an enabled world" which means that the more educational, economic, cultural and spiritual opportunities that girls and women have in their communities, the healthier and wealthier those communities will become. Issues of gender equality involve every aspect of our lives from big to small.

The world is a long way from achieving gender equality. More women are likely to suffer severe injuries in a car crash as most safety features have been designed for men. Thousands of girls become child brides every day because they are seen as an economic burden for their families. Only 25% of seats in national parliaments are filled by women. Less than 7% of world leaders are female. Six countries give women equal work rights and Canada does not. The main message of IWD 2020 is that each person can do our bit to bring about gender equality.

"When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful." Malala Yousafzai

Although the focus for IWD is on women and girls, issues of being treated with equity and respect is important for men and boys. Males are victims of abuse, too. The numbers for women are higher. 1 in 3 women experience abuse at some point in their lives. I believe it is 1 in 4 for males. One abusive situation is one too many. Indigenous women are 5x more likely to be abused. It's important to remember and celebrate that the majority of men are not abusers. The majority of men want a more peaceful world and positive future for their daughters, granddaughters, sisters and nieces.

As we read in the gospel lesson today, Jesus believed that Samaritans, a culturally specific minority who were despised by the majority of Jews, were people too. He believed that a Samaritan woman, who was

"At the core, feminism simply consists of the radical notion that women are people too."

despised for her culture, looked down on for her gender had a questionable reputation because of multiple marriages was a person, too. And so were tax collectors, prostitutes, beggars, disabled, abled, rich, and poor, outcasts, insiders, criminals, governors, and slaves. Jesus treated every person as "people too."

He went out of his way to ensure that the ones who were not treated or seen as worthy by the religious or political big shots of the day were welcomed, healed, lifted up and encouraged to believe that they were worthy because they were people, too. No matter what the prevailing culture told them they were—no matter who their faith leaders told them they were—no matter what circumstances told them they were—they were more, much more. They were blessed because they were God’s people. And as God’s children they were salt of the earth and lights in their world.

Lastly, for Canadians who are marking IWD the hashtag label #BecauseOfYou is being promoted on twitter. #BecauseOfYou encourages us to celebrate the women and girls who make or have made a positive impact on your life. On the card that you were given when you came in to church today, write down a name of a woman or women who have made an impact on your life. Past or present, a community leader or someone important in your life.

I invite you to take your card home with you. You may want to add more names as you think of them. Then post it up somewhere. Place it where you will notice it and be reminded of that woman or girl you admire. Put it where your child, spouse or grandchild may notice it. Then if you are asked about the name you can share why that woman matters to you—you can tell them about March 8 being IWD. Plains people, gals and gents, I salute you! #BecauseOfYou I am living my calling from Jesus to be a preacher woman. Amen.

Paragraphs of Margaret’s sermon selected by Malcolm Rust