

**September 26, 2021 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29**  
**James 5:13-20, Mark 9:38-50**

[<https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>. Minnesota Council of Churches Minnesota's Racial Legacy: Finally Telling the Truth, September 24-25, 2021. <https://www.argusleader.com/story/news/local/2021/07/17/140-years-after-being-taken-rosebud-sioux-children-buried-emotional-ceremonies/7980592002/>]

**Grace and peace, beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**Say their names.**

Are you familiar with the names Eldad and Medad?

These two fellows are rarely taught in Sunday School.

They show up by name only once in a sliver of the history from the book of Numbers,  
in our Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible.

And, really, who preaches about Eldad and Medad?!

Certainly Joshua wouldn't like that idea - no way!

You heard the story this morning: Intern Emily read it to us in the first lessons.

**That community of Israelites is in the wilderness, worn out and weary.**

Today, it seems they are crankier as ever,

hankering for some meat,

remembering for nostalgia's-sake what now seemed like the good life in Egypt.

The fish and cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and garlic.

In the wilderness, on this road to freedom, this journey to liberation,

all they have is manna, day in and day out, manna.

**Their anxiety and frustration prompt a moment of leadership crisis for Moses**

who has been carrying a heavy load on his own.

Spread out the leadership, God instructs Moses,

widen the base.

Start, Moses, by calling on 70 trusted elders.

With these 70 God shares Moses's spirit and the power of prophesy.

**The only trouble is Eldad and Medad who** are picked to be part of this trusted group

linger back at the camp rather than making their way to the tent.

Don't you wonder why?

I can only begin to imagine:

Maybe they had a sick family member they needed to nurse.  
Maybe they were irritated by the process, believed it unjust.  
Maybe they didn't feel like they had anything to contribute.  
Maybe their voices hadn't been accepted before, deemed legitimate, valued, worthy,  
respected, honored, welcomed, and trying again seemed futile.

Who knows why, the Biblical witness here is brief.  
But hold-on-to-your-hats, even without going out to the tent,  
Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.  
That's what someone reports, breathless, concerned.  
Oh Lord, stop them, Joshua cries to Moses.  
But Moses wonders, "Are you jealous for my sake?  
Would that all the Lord's people were prophets,  
and that the Lord would put the spirit on them."

**Spirited Eldad and Medad, say their names.**

Which voices will we listen to?  
Which witness is the right witness?  
Which stories, whose stories, whose experience can guide us, shape us, move us, heal us?  
Those are the questions at the heart of today's first reading, and not so different from the gospel.  
"Someone is casting out demons in your name, Jesus!"  
The disciples (like Joshua) expected Jesus to squelch what they see as a threat.  
Instead Jesus takes a wider view.  
No need for the disciples or us to act as nightclub bouncers, or gate keepers,  
as if Jesus needs our protection.  
Eldad and Medad, say their names.

**On Friday evening and Saturday, along with a few of you, in person and on Zoom,**

I joined a conference offered by the Minnesota Council of Churches.  
It was called **Minnesota's Racial Legacy: Finally telling the truth.**  
Many of you would find value in it and I'll make the links available.  
This was the first event of a 10 year racial justice commitment by the Minnesota Council of Churches.  
These years will include truth telling, education, and reparations.  
This follows the decades-long truth and healing work around the world,  
think of South Africa or Columbia, for instance.

**Walking into Plymouth Congregational Church on Friday,**

Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs from the MN Council held the shell of burning sage and we smudged.  
It was a time focused on healing,  
but not easy healing, or quick healing,  
rather the healing that comes with telling the truth and being heard and seen.  
Healing that meets at the intersections between  
movements happening around the nation and right here close to home,  
movements center around race, climate, public safety, and peace,  
in congregations and the wider church,  
in cities, and on the streets, and at the national level,  
in the tent, and at the camp, if you will.

Dear friends, this is a space in which we Lutheran, we Christians, we humans,  
we as a primarily white congregation, must dare to dwell.

Like in the first lesson, we sometimes mistakenly assume the Spirit is only working at the tent,  
but Eldad and Medad, they experienced it, too, right where they were.

Say their names, Eldad and Medad.

**The speaker on Friday evening was Christine Diindiisi McCleave,**

an enrolled citizen of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Nation and  
the chief executive officer of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.  
You can find more at [boardingschoolhealing.org](http://boardingschoolhealing.org)  
She spoke of trauma, the intergenerational trauma carried in one's body and soul, trauma in DNA,  
and that need for truth telling, history sharing,  
prophetic witness that allows for the trauma to begin to be released.

**An element of this is how we talk about boarding schools and the graves.**

In media reports, in the imagination of many white-bodied people like me, phrases are used,  
like the discovery of graves of children.

Over and over these Indigenous speakers and Black speakers  
reminded us that these graves weren't just now discovered!

For generations the communities, the families, the relatives, even the government,  
have known the graves existed.

It wasn't often talked about,

who'd want to share such pain with their grandchildren?

These schools: the mission to “kill the Indian, save the man”,  
the experience of students and their families,  
the grief of culture, language, and relationships lost,  
the generations of trauma, and the anger and grief that comes with it,  
this wasn't news in Indigenous communities,  
and the graves weren't hidden and just now discovered.

This is part of the truth that's finally coming out.

Say their names.

### **Christine also told the story of the Carlisle Repatriation.**

In Carlisle, Pennsylvania,

Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the first government-run boarding school, opening in 1879  
Of course there were many, many other schools, some run by the church, some by the government.  
A total of 300 Native American boarding schools existed in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

This July the remains of nine children who died at the Carlisle school were finally brought to their homeland  
and buried at the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

The Rosebud community welcomed these nine with a caravan of 400 vehicles.

The community was crying out for a space to physically grieve the loss of their children  
who died 140 years ago.

They held a prayer service,

shared the few pictures that existed,

and honored their lives and theirs deaths, and the trauma of these generations.

### **Say their names:**

Ernest Knocks Off White Thunder,

Warren Painter Bear Paints Dirt,

Maud Little Girl Swift Bear,

Dora Her Pipe Brave Bull,

Friend Hollow Horn Bear,

Rose Long Face Little Hawk,

Lucy Take The Tail Pretty Hawk,

Alvan One That Kills Seven Horses, and

Dennis Strikes First Blue Tomahawk.

**Say their names.**

Dear people of God, say their names.

I realize fully that this isn't a light subject.

And we know that healing comes when the truth is told.

Christine Diindiisi McCleave marveled at the way the pandemic has broken us open on this human level.

It made a way for the murder of George Floyd to affect us.

(God knows how many other black and brown bodies have been killed that didn't ignite an uprising,  
that scarcely gave us pause.)

But this time, this time, we looked at one another, this time it was different.

Now, on the heels of May and June 2020,

perhaps because we're learning at the intersections,

a Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools

is beginning and justice and healing is possible.

I can only wonder what other areas of our lives need this truth telling, this healing.

**Beloved ones, say their names.**

"Would that all the Lord's people were prophets."

Say their names, for in these exhausting days,

the Spirit is stirring here and there,

beyond the tent, right where we are,

in the sanctuary, and at home, on the streets and at the intersections.

Jesus opens a way.

The Spirit quiets our anxious souls,

and brings Eldad and Medad, you and me,

to prophesy with humanity and with grace,

to listen well,

to finally speak the truth,

and to wade into the healing. Thanks be to God. Amen.