

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

## It's Time to Turn the Tables

Good morning. May the great spirit carry these words from my heart thru my mouth to your ears into your heart.

Today – riding the donkey, turning the tables, and meaning a fig-tree to death. donkey

That Greeting, I did a few weeks past was part of something longer. Lori said: That's a sermon. Shorten it and save that". I jokingly – maybe – referred to it as an exhortation benediction.

A recap: I said - "Listen to us even if it makes you uncomfortable. We're not telling our stories to hurt you. Stories are how we make sense of our world. Knowing the stories of our ancestors is about knowing the stories that are the foundations of our emotional/spiritual/physical and intellectual worlds. This is the journey we take you through in my decolonizing the heart workshops Peter and the team asked me to speak as a "teacher", so... DTH is about transformation. And, it's important because: we don't know the things we don't know.

We can change ourselves and make ourselves more accountable in action to the exhortations of Jesus, but we need to do this as people grounded in our own histories. This is so that our baggage doesn't get in the way of our ability to hear other people's stories without getting defensive and oppressive. "Listen to us even if it makes you uncomfortable – and remember: You don't have to say anything – it might be better if you don't.

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

Sit in it – we have to live it. We don't get a choice. Listen to our anger – there's a reason for it. Make a list of all the things you need – the things essential to your existence, ask yourself if this discomfort takes anything away from them.

We can learn to welcome the discomfort knowing that it will bring tough knowledge or, as I say: "We need to learn to be vulnerable because we need to be vulnerable to learn". Let our stories be "good trouble" in disturbing the master narrative of the colonizer and the patriarchs. We have to live it daily - you can listen.

We can do this – any of us can. That's the emotional work that our spiritual strength supports, they're interconnected not interchangeable. But the words may cause discomfort just the same. We can be part of the solution and not part of the problem when we recognize this simple fact: the status quo is not a neutral position.

RE this status quo: Recently, I saw a video clip on The Daily Show, and a Black woman comedian was outside a burning police department, addressing the status quo. She said:

"History!? We built this country; we'll burn it down if we please! Maybe then they'll listen to us". On another occasion my ears were blessed with this gem of reality and living the Jesus way: "They are lucky we want justice and equality and not revenge!"

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

As an Indigenous woman, I can especially relate to the latter, irrespective of my Grandmother's peccadilloes, John A. Macdonald starved most of my ancestors to death.

So, I come among you as best as I am able, in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus. And you need to know this: Anyone from a group of people who experience systemic "othering" and "degradation" of our humanity, and is among you - talking, is walking the walk of Jesus – peacemaker, councilor, teacher, ... .

And this gets right into today's scripture and 3 the acts I want to relate to our times now. Why did Jesus die?

Lori and I were discussing this story – one of my favourite Jesus stories – actually, it's my favourite, and I said because he's laying it out – it's not words uttered in a desert – he's bringing the fire of truth to the ears of the powerful. He's challenging the status quo. And, to the question of some time ago : Why did Jesus die?

Lori put it this way: "Of course, that the turning of the tables comes directly after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Jerusalem is Jesus' destination for the entire gospel, everything he does is taking him there. And when he gets there, the first thing he does is start turning over tables. I hadn't seen it before, but there it is. He makes a beeline for the temple and starts disrupting business as usual".

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

And he rode in on a donkey – a symbol among other things of peace and humility in speaking the truth and it terrified the wounded broken egos of the acquisitions – people who fills their spiritual/emotional holes with things.

Lori and I continued our conversation and she told me about him damming a fig tree to death. “Then he sees a fig tree and asks his disciples to bring him some of its fruit. When they return to report there are only leaves (because it's out of season) he curses the tree, and it shrivels. It's like he's in that zone - his blood is boiling, and nothing is safe.”

After, we hung up, I thought about this more and several questions came to mind. One that stuck for me is this: Is this Jesus' acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the anger at injustice – that is, if you do enough to anyone, they may pop and curse a fig-tree?, or:

As the Sister at the police station burning said:  
And there's another story behind that abandoned unlocked police station. ... that's another story...

“We built this country; we'll burn it down if we please! Maybe then they'll listen to us”

Another of the questions was this: Is it true that nothing really safe? Or, this is a safe outlet? An honoring of pain and frustration? Is this the message of the fig-tree: if the people of Jesus have listened and understand our anger –the good people - like the peaceful fig-tree, if the good people who get our anger don't just sit there saying, “Yes, I would be angry too”. If they, if it were them, in a similar situation and they had

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

their druthers, would they do something or would they just say: “ohhhhh”.

That's what we're saying to you – do something. Don't do it for us – do it for justice and peace and love and healing. Do your own work first. Or contemporaneously. Yes, we are our cousin's keepers, it is not our job to do your job.

So, here is the exhortation benediction, I offer: :

Truth is necessary before reconciliation and, there's a lot of truth. (Brackets – discussion criticizing post-modernists attacks on feminism and Marx etc.),

Your reconciliation with your ancestors' and knowing your emotional landscape, is your homework. I ask you to do your homework – It's about ethics and power, examining your privilege and entitlement. Remember – ethics is simple: know your power and know how your decisions, actions, and **inactions**, affect those you have power over.

As Helen Keller said: I cried because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.

Remember, harm is about effect not intention. So many micro aggressions are rooted in unexamined privilege. One of them is asking a question with an expectation you'll get your answer - your fix. If you're really interested and want to learn, stop expecting, stop assuming - you need to do your work. I've spent 12 years in higher ed, decades as a teacher, and decades in the legal system. I've learned your systems - I've lived through your systems. We're not asking

Oct. 18, 2020 – It's Time to Turn the Tables – Diem Marchand-Lafortune

you to learn our systems, in fact, we'd prefer you not – though there may be teachings we may choose to share as they may resonate with you as we engage in right relationship with each other. What we're doing is asking you to critically examine your own systems. If you do anything less, you are continuing to expect us to keep doing the heavy lifting.

I've described it another way many times with some of you.

You want to build bridges but you want to sit in the comfy grassy area with the picnic table on your side of the river while we risk our lives, extending ourselves on the cantilever as it gets more and more precarious as we are real living human beings and the truths we bear are a heavy burden.

We'll give you some starting points such as books to read and films but remember, when we are asked: "Tell us this or that" – we have little choice but to answer. If we say "no" – we get: "You're so angry about injustice but you don't want to help us understand". So, we do it and, for the most part, we do it with grace. We have no choice - our survival requires that truth must be outed.

You must free yourself of your ignorance – you are not bad for this but, choosing to remain ignorant is not living in grace.

Jesus rode a donkey, turned the tables on the status quo and said, "Hey, this pisses me off".

Go in the peace and courage of Jesus and be safe.