

What would Jesus do?



By Nate Smelle

Every living thing has a story to tell.

Whether speaking in words, sounds, actions, or inactions, the expressions resonating from our existence communicate a message for other living beings to interpret now and in the future.

Just as trees communicate with nutrients through their roots, what we say and do sends energy to others within our community. Who we choose to feed with our expressions and the nature of the energy we send, leaves behind a telling footprint of what it is, but more accurately, what it was that we value.

A similar message is conveyed silently yet powerfully, when the energy sent by a living forest to a dying tree transforms from a sharing of nutrients through an underground network of interconnected roots into the forces of decomposition. Quietly, the forest weighs the current circumstances at any given moment, and makes a conscious decision in the best interest of its community whether to shift the intention of its energy. This decision is made carefully, based upon a calculation of the type of energy the tree being fed is giving back to its community, versus how much it is taking. When the force of gravity is stronger than a tree's will to soak in the sun, water, and soil, it dies slowly and its nutrients provide a final boost of energy to the forest which once fed it.

All this compassionate magic happens without a word. Yet, at the same time, the story told loudly through this timeless interaction among trees reveals the strength and joy we can receive as individuals when we give more good energy to our social network than we take. The essence of this process is a form of universal health-care, community-based education, and a naturally occurring endorsement of socialism. As an advocate of caring for each other as a community, Jesus Christ indicated that he understood the value of socialism as it is expressed by a forest in Matthew 22:39 when he told his followers, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

As we have come to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than continuing to feed an outdated economic system fuelled by and obsessed with greed, it is in our best interest as individuals and communities to invest more of our time, energy, and money into our future. This means that from now on, instead of defending an individual's right to destroy and plunder the planet for personal short-term profits, we must prioritize health, education, long-term care for our elders, housing for the most vulnerable, and the environment that sustains us. Most importantly, we need to prioritize long-term thinking.

It's not rocket science. It's common sense based on our observations of fact. For instance, if we truly love and respect our elders we

do not allow our government to privatize our long-term care system so that a few rich folks can profit off of making our loved ones last years, months, weeks, days, minutes, moments miserable. Instead, we take profit out of long-term care so that every bit of time, energy, money, and resources we spend can be devoted to improving the health and well-being of our elders. If we truly love and respect our children, we do not defund our education system, shrink class sizes, or cut teaching jobs. Instead, we invest education and fix our schools, so that every child has the best opportunity to succeed.

If we truly love and respect our future, we do not allow our government to issue an unprecedented number of Minister's Zoning Orders and sell off publicly-owned ecologically-significant wetlands and green space, to their developer friends. Instead, we protect these sacred hubs of biodiversity and the vital ecosystem services they provide - water filtration, air purification, carbon storage to name a few - for the sake of our own health, as well as the health of future generations and the planet itself. It really is simple. It's a matter of putting the best interests of the people and the planet now and in the future, before the short-sighted individual interests of a few.

When looking back on the patterns of messages and stories we share with our community throughout our history, the intention of the energy in these communications becomes crystal clear. That is why I am such a big fan of letters to the editor. Acting as a brief window into a specific period of time, letters give us a glimpse of what it is like to view an issue, and the world from another angle. Whether reading a well-articulated letter that provides a fresh perspective on an ongoing crisis in need of attention; or, a poorly-written, babbling confession of an individual's homophobia and racism that is too full of hatred towards others to ever be seen in print, each and every correspondence moves an important conversation forward.

When participating in this conversation it is our choice as individuals whether to engage others with peace, love, compassion, and understanding; or, whether to steal the energy of others with our hatred. Before making this defining decision about who we are and what type of energy we want to share, for some, it might be worth asking, "What would Jesus do?"