

Compassion, Correction, and Conviction
Sunday, January 9, 2022, 11:30 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Mark Chase

Good Morning, Beloved. I think it's more appropriate than ever, that after 5 weeks apart, we borrow the words of the Psalmist in this moment, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" KN95 Mask, hand sanitizer up but all for the Glory of God amen. And for those participating online, you're in the house with us, we *feel* you even if in this moment, we can't see you...We feel you even if we can't see you...Before we jump in turn to about 2 or 3 people and just tell them "I'm smiling under this mask, because I'm in church with you." Now don't find more than 3 people because I grew up in the Episcopal Church so I know I got about 6 minutes to preach and I just used 4 of em....I was an acolyte, who wanted to get home to watch The Yankees

Friends, It's been a long, long, long....two years. And it feels like the refrain of our soul has been one so eloquently captured by that Yonkers New York Poet who once said "Ya'll goin make me lose my mind, up in here, up in here, ya'll goin make me go all out, up in here...ya'll goin make me act a fool...up in here..."

We've experienced being on Lockdown. All of us to some extent have experienced feeling beat down

Our capacity is at its lowest while the demands of life feel like they're at their highest.

It's been especially hard for parents with small children. It's been especially hard for parents of school aged children. It's been especially hard if you live alone with no children. It's been especially hard for actual, children. It's been especially hard if you've been living with roommates and other adults free to come and go as they please. It's been especially hard for young adults missing out on key life moments, it's been especially hard for the elderly missing out on loved ones. It's been especially hard on all of us. But as hard as it's been, this has also been a time where we've leaned into our spiritual disciplines like never before. I know I have. The spiritual disciplines have saved me and strengthened me to my core. The latest of which is a spiritual discipline called...Wordle! And I know wordle is a spiritual discipline, because it is only the power of The Holy Spirit rather, the Holy Ghost, that has kept us from not spoiling the wordle for each other from day to day...other spiritual disciplines that have preserved us that deserve mention are sourdough bread, Tiger King, the last dance, Wanda-Vision, And another one of my latest favorites, Disney's Encanto(we don't talk about Bruno that ul preach just not today)...In this season, Memes have become our liturgy and watching the tv without checking our phone is the new lectio divina. For two years, let's just tell the truth, for two years, we been a hot mess on a good day...Well, let me just speak for myself, All Saints, for two years, I been a hot mess, on a good day...

But ya'll can I tell you, that being a hot mess, on a good day, puts us in Good Company on this day! Because in today's Gospel Story, not too unlike this moment now, there is a crowd that

has gathered to experience Jesus, and the most unifying thing they have in common, is ain't none of em got they stuff together. Just look at somebody and say "I know you don't got your stuff together, cuz I don't got my stuff together." And if you want substitute the word stuff, for another word, go right ahead, Mike, Sally, Alfredo and Susan, all said it's okay. Especially Susan.

Ahhh ya'll this is a crowd that has been on lockdown by The Roman Empire, that has been beat down by diseases and demons, that is at low capacity, And for some they might even be at, NO CAPACITY...And they're bringing all that lack of capacity to Jesus, and the Good News is, what they lack in capacity, Jesus supplies in Compassion. The capacity of the crowd may be low, but the compassion of Christ is High. The Capacity of this crowd may be absent, but the compassion of Jesus is abundant.... Ahhhh that was Good news for the crowd back then, and it's good news for this crowd this morning, any low capacity people in the building today, who need to be met, by a high compassion Jesus?!! Our capacity is so low ya'll. Can we please lower our expectations of each other....this ain't the season, to send the follow up text, to the follow up email, from the follow up voicemail...If that's you just blink don't raise your hand.... just look at somebody and say "Be patient, I am not who i used to be, and neither are you" Our absence of capacity, is met by Jesus abundance of compassion....where are the places that can serve as an opportunity for you to admit that you're at low capacity...PEOPLE TOUCHED JESUS, BECAUSE, POWER WAS COMING OUT FROM HIM. **The people reached for Jesus, and Jesus simply, let himself be reached. He simply let his abundance of compassion, flow towards their absence of capacity. Jesus healed, no questions asked....Ahhh All Saints, He didn't make them fill out any special forms, He didn't take them through a bureacractic process, Jesus didn't ask for any insurance I.D. cards, Jesus didn't make them pay a deductible. He didn't ask for their employment status. Jesus didn't re-route them to another department, Jesus didn't ask for their citizenship status, Jesus didn't criminalize their attempts to get the healing they so desperately needed, Jesus simply allowed himself to be touched, and allowed the healing power of God, to flow to whomever it needed to flow, and to do, whatever needed to be done. The compassion of God fit the curvature of their specific pain. The compassion of God is a benevolent shape shifter. If we rush through life we might not notice, but if we slow down, as Howard Thurman writes, if we slow down and sit long enough to see ourselves pass by...we might see that sometimes The compassion of God can come shaped like timely prescribed medication, balancing chemicals and regulating levels that we could never regulate in our own strength, Ahhhh sometimes The compassion of God can come shaped like a suitcase that begs you to pack it in the middle of the night to escape an abusive situation, Ahhhh sometimes the compassion of God can come shaped like a little green book, that like it's own pillar of fire by night, guided African Americans to safety through the Jim Crow South, Ahhhh sometimes The compassion of God, can come shaped like a much needed yoga mat, begging you to rest your generational trauma on its edges, calling you to get out of your mind and into your body, ahhh sometimes the compassion of God, can come shaped like the hand of a toddler, reminding you that underneath all your grown up armor, is a little child that needs to be kind to themselves, Sometimes the compassion of God, can come in the shape of a circle, of a recovery or support group, reminding you that whatever bottom you have it, someone else has hit it to, and this isn't the end of the story, ahhhh the compassion of God can come shaped, like a rainbow flag on a church's front lawn, letting the world know, that The Love of Jesus doesn't come, with**

asterisks and yeah buts.....Ahhhhh I wish, I had just 3 people, that could testify, to the shape shifting compassion of God.... Jesus doesn't mind our absence of capacity, coming into contact with his abundance of compassion. That's the hope of this table, we get to come to this table, and bring ALL OF WHO WE ARE, and Not just the best of who we are, because I don't know about you, but for some of us it's been a long long long time, since we've seen the best of who we are. Don't raise your hand just blink. If that's you. All are welcome, and when you get here, ALL OF YOU IS WELCOME. The compassion of Jesus welcomes our low capacity

When I was a little boy my mommy and daddy would throw these big extended family dinners, and they'd invite over uncles and aunties and nieces and nephews, the only problem is we had a tiny dining room table, so I'd look at the size of the table, and I'd think about all the people who were coming, and then I'd look again at the size of the dining room table, and I'd wonder how we were all going to fit, but then my mom and dad would go into the closet, and get what's called a table leaf, and then they'd open up that tiny dining room table, and put in the leaf, and the table would get bigger, this table today, is kind of like that table back then, the more people who show up, the bigger the table gets. The compassion of God, always makes the table bigger.

So the Good news is, that the good news in this story, doesn't begin when Jesus opens his mouth, The Good News in this story begins when Jesus opens his hands....but when Jesus opens his mouth....he says some pretty outlandish things...some things that don't quite make sense . BLESSED ARE THE POOR, BLESSED ARE THE HUNGRY, BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO WEEP, BLESSED ARE THE HATED, EXCLUDED, INSULTED, and REJECTED...If I'm real ya'll, it kind of sounds like Jesus is trippin. It kind of sounds like Jesus is wrong, because the world that Jesus is describing, ain't the world that exists. So what is Jesus doing....I think I have one idea, I guess I should or I shouldn't bother being up here if I didn't, but I want to read some numbers that might help us understand what Jesus might be up to....

8.7, 14.5, -1.50, -2.25, 30

8.7, 14.5, -2.00, -1.75, 160

Ahhh Ya'll thinking Chase is buggin out...But if there are any eye doctors in the house then ya'll maybe know, I'm getting real personal in this pulpit this morning, that was the prescription to my contact lens, you see, I have what's called a slight astigmatism, many of us do, it's a defect in the eye, that causes us to see images distorted, and so I need corrective lenses, in order to see the world, in the way in which, it ought to be seen...Because....left to myself...I don't see world, properly....If you get it early....I don't preach as long....

Could it be beloved, that one of the things happening in this sermon, is that Jesus is offering us, spiritual, moral, and ethical corrective lenses, to not just see the world the way it is, but to see the world the way it ought to be seen. Could it be beloved, that Jesus is saying I want to offer you the corrective lens of a New Imagination, where the poor are blessed, and the hungry are

satisfied, could it be, All Saints, that Jesus is saying, I want to offer you the corrective lens of hope, so that we don't give up on a world, where those are grieving experience joy again, and where those who are excluded and rejected, find inclusion and safety. In my Sanctified Imagination, could it be, that Jesus is inviting us to use OUR corrective, and collective imagination, to see the world not just for what it is, but for what it could be! Naaaah Jesus ain't trippin, Jesus is just handing out prescriptions!!!

Jesus is Saying come, see a world, where we know, that Black Lives Matter, by the actual flourishing of Black People and Black communities that echoes throughout every sector of society, free from the chains of Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy

Jesus is saying come, see a world, where our Indigenous siblings all over Turtle Island, and on this land of the Tongva, live in peace and prosperity, in their place of origin and legacy

Jesus is saying come, see a world, where patriarchy bows to equity, and where homphobic and transphobic violence ceases to exist,

Where Asian Hate has been stopped in its tracks by people who refuse to be bystanders, and commit to be UPSTANDERS

Jesus is saying come, see a world, where no one's citizenship is questioned, no one's community is over-policed, and the resources needed for life aren't hoarded by the 1 percent

Ahhhhhh Jesus is saying come, see a world...My child, I know you see THIS WORLD, Ahhhh but Dwayne and Whitley, let me show you a different world....

Naaaaahhhhhh Jesus ain't trippin, he's handing out prescriptions, prescriptions to this thing called, the kin-dom of God

And beloved once we see that world, we have a responsibility to co-create that world, with God, and with one another, in the beloved community, that Dr. King taught us to believe,

Once we see the revolutionary world, of the revolutionary Jesus, we start to get active, and agitated, once we see what could be, we start showing up to the city council meetings (in person or on zoom), we start signing the petitions and writing to our elected officials, we put our bodies in the street, some of us might even mess around and leave corporate america and its capitalist agendas, and start a non-profit that brings Justice for the oppressed, we start disobeying the status quo, we start giving away money, we start valuing people over property, and we wake up to the reality that power resides with the people...

Did you know that you have power??? I'll never forget seeing a protest in The Bronx New York not too far from where I grew up, The NYPD began doing mass arrests of protesters, and they did so many, that they needed bus drivers to take people to the county jail, and they loaded up a bus full of protesters, and they slapped the bus door to let the bus driver know to go ahead

and hit the gas, and would you know, this one bus driver said “not today”, and she refused to put her foot on the gas, and would you know that nobody went to jail that day, not because of an executive order that came from on high, not because a judge found it in the kindness of their heart, but because a bus driver refused to put her foot on the gas, I don’t know what bus they’re asking you to drive, but you always have the option to not put your foot on the gas...

Once we see a different world, it’s our responsibility to help create it!

So let’s recap our low capacity, meets Jesus high compassion, and after we receive Jesus’ compassion, he then compassionately gives us some lens of correction, to see the world as it ought to be seen, not just for what it is, but for what it could be....

And I believe not only does Jesus want us to use those lenses to see the world, he wants us to use those lenses to see GOD! Jesus is saying I want to give you these corrective lens to see divinity as divinity ought to be seen, it’s kinda like this...Jesus is saying this so we see who God is....it’s like this...

My kids are 4 and 2, toddlers, it’s a fun house, and like toddlers are prone to do, they have a tendency to fight over stuff, And I try not to trip too hard about it ya’ll because their arguments are super fixable at this age....and some of the times I try to use their arguments as an opportunity to teach them about sharing and patience and all that stuff, so I use their conflict as a learning opportunity for both of them....But every now and again they get into an argument and I can clearly see, oh, one of you is clearly wrong!!! Clearly!!!! And this ain’t the time for me to teach lessons on, **both sides**, nah this is a time for me to....**TAKE SIDES!!!!** **Look at your neighbor and say “if we get it early we can make it to the Super bowl”**

The beatitudes is JESUS TAKING SIDES, The beatitudes is Jesus saying

I am the poor, I am the hungry, I am the hated, rejected, and excluded...I am Amir Locke, Anthony Mclain, Breonna Taylor, J.R. Thomas, Nina Pop, Rubi Dominguez and Vincent Chen, Jesus says picture me on a swing set next to Tamir, in a nightclub in Orlando, in the back seat next to Philando, wherever you find the margins I am there. I am the asylum seeker, infant tucked closed to my chest, indeed, this Jesus, was the asylum seeker as infant, held close to his mother’s chest, seeking aslyum in Africa.

As James Cone reminds us the cross is the lynching tree

As Dr. Christina Cleveland reminds us God, Is a Black Woman, because if God, is taking the side of the oppressed and the marginlized we must remember the words of Malcolm X, “that the most un-protected person in America, is the black woman.” So in our context yes, who, is closer to God, than a Black Woman. We need corrective lenses to stop seeing God as a white cis gendered, wealthy heterosexual man in the sky, and to start seeing the God who is with us, intimately and closely, and who Mothers us into our true selves.....

Jesus is handing out prescriptions for how the world ought to be seen, and for how GOD OUGHT TO BE SEEN!

Compassion, Correction, and then Jesus drops the mic with some Conviction, Now I'm almost done because I know enough to know that conviction ain't necessarily the most Episcopal word in the world...

But Jesus leaves us with some conviction, with a little ouch, with a little pain, but the pain isn't for those who are already suffering pain, the pain is for those who are perpetuating suffering

WOE to you are rich, well fed, laughing, who everyone speaks well of, WOE to you who are comforted...

To understand Jesus's anger, you have to understand the world that Jesus was living in, and the people that Jesus was looking at.

These were people living under military occupation, whose communities were heavily policed by Roman Soldiers, Where their loved ones were crucified and murdered under state sanctioned violence

And where crippling debt and economic exploitation was commonplace, sometimes coming at the hands of tax collectors from their own community, and the spiritual leadership of their own priests

In other words, Jesus is angry because he's staring at wealth, comfort, prosperity and well being, that are propped up by the labor, exploitation, taxes, and the misery of the marginalized. Jesus sees his world and says as activist and friend of All Saints Church Andre Henry often tells us "that doesn't have to be this way" "It doesn't have to be this way..." So Jesus says, Woe to YOU, who are making it this way!!! Woe to YOU, who are making it this way....The world is this way, because people make it this way!

Woe to you,

Woe to you, Billionaires in the space race, trying to escape the climate change that the greed you exhibit helped create in the first place, and whose factories are filled with racism and xenophobia

Woe to you, city of Pasadena, and Pasadena Police Department, who spend \$646,000 on shot spotter surveillance technology, to surveil its citizens, rather than putting that over half a million dollars into services that promote life and well being

Woe to my white siblings, who have Black Lives Matter signs in their yards, and who have read how to be an anti-racist, but who refuse to give up any real power or privilege and only seem to want to practice Anti-Blackness

Woe to my fellow cis gender, heterosexual Black Men, who aren't doing the work of pursuing intersectionality, and who, through direct action and/or indifference perpetuate homophobia, violence against Black women, and violence against Black Trans Women, while those same people, march and organize for our freedom out in the streets

Woe to me, and woe to all of us, when we participate in the making of a world, that eventually, none of us will be able to live in...ya'll there is a holy urgency to this address by Jesus

Jesus leaves us with some conviction, because of the urgency of the situation is this, we either co-create the world we want to see, or we will succumb to a world that none of us wants to see....

Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the grieving, the rejected, hated and excluded, may we have the compassion, the courage, conviction, the hope, the imagination, the indignation, to make the world that Jesus sees and hopes for, the world that we actually live in....

Amen.