

Leave. Her. Alone.
Sunday, April 3, 2022, 11:30 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Mark Chase

All Saints Church, we are less than two weeks away from Holy Week and Easter Sunday. It's that pivotal time in the church calendar where we reflect on and celebrate the final days and actions of Jesus. I remember as a little boy having my Easter clothes laid out for me before church, perfectly ironed and creased by my Pops, who honestly could have opened up his own dry cleaners he was that good with an Iron. I had to be fresh for the occasion. We all had to be fresh, for the occasion, and if I'm honest I still feel that way to this day

Because this is the time of year where we remember and reflect on, the reality that Jesus walked a lonely road all the way to his own execution, all the way up to a hill called Calvary, and that he was forced to carry his own cross, and that he was crucified on that same cross in solidarity with the crucified and oppressed peoples of this world, and that after he was crucified he was laid in a tomb, and he spent all night Friday in the tomb, all Day Saturday, in the tomb, but early Sunday morning, he got up, and his tomb was first discovered empty by his Momma, along with Mary Magdalene, and several other women who were the first witnesses and preachers of the Gospel..... then he appeared to the other disciples after they stopped trippin and decided to stop hiding, and don't worry i won't preach resurrection any longer this morning... I know it's just the 5th Sunday in lent...look at somebody and say "he knows it's just the 5th Sunday in Lent"....but this is a special time of year... where we remember and reflect on all the special things done by Jesus...which is why church I'm so confused by this passage this morning ya'll, I wonder if the composers of the lectionary, had any idea what they were doing when they chose this passage, because this passage, isn't about any of the signs and wonders Jesus performed, or the trials and tribulations Jesus overcame, as a matter of fact, this passage isn't about Jesus at all, I mean Jesus is in the movie, but make no mistake the movie is not about Jesus.. this passage, is about a woman named Mary, her hair, and some expensive perfume....

Ahhh this Gospel Passage, is about a woman, who in a room full of men, takes up all the space in this story, and embodies for us what it looks like, to have deep intimacy with Jesus, she takes up space, she shifts the narrative, she exposes false motives, and makes it rain over the feet of Jesus with the most expensive perfume, ahhh today, she may have popped a bottle of Don Perrion, and Jesus in effect says....LET.IT.BE.SO!!!!

She takes her hair, and all of the life experience that came wrapped and intertwined in every strand, think of the days she must have pinned it up to keep herself cool in the summertime, and all the moments it added warmth in the winter, she takes her hair, an intimate and sacred part of herself, and uses it to anoint Jesus, It reminds me of the words of prophet and singer song writer Solange, when in 2016 she pens a manifesto for the hair of black women everywhere when she says to the world "Don't touch my hair, when it's the feelings, I wear, Don't touch my soul, when it's the rhythm, I know, Don't touch my crown, when it's the vision I found, they don't understand, what it means to me...." Mary of Bethany, finds herself in a room

full of men, that have no idea what it means to be her....because if they did, they wouldn't have rebuked her....they try to stop her, and they try to tell her that she must be mistaken, they try to assure her that specific part of herself, isn't welcome at the feet of Jesus, John's Gospel tries to blame it all on Judas, but the other Gospels note, it was all the disciples who were trippin...and Jesus says leave her alone...This woman is vulnerable and Jesus centers her, and protects her, with three words..Leave Her. Alone...The disciples attempt to push her from the center, back into the margins, but Jesus protects her, simply by proclaiming...Leave. Her. Alone...Ahhhh this is Good News, for anybody, who has ever been told, that there's a part of you, that Jesus wouldn't be interested in welcoming, ahhhh, All Saints Church, this passage, is Good News this morning, for our Queer Siblings, who the church has historically tried to convince, that their sexuality, and understanding of themselves and who they know themselves to be, isn't something Jesus would be interested, in welcoming, Today, we say to Homophobia, Transphobia, and Heteronormativity, All disguised as Christianity, leave our Queer siblings, alone....This is Good News, for our BIPOC siblings, who have spent years being assaulted by White Jesus, told that the unique brilliance of our ethnic identities, cultural traditions and ancestral wisdom, wouldn't be something that Jesus would be interested in welcoming ahhhh But today, we say to White Jesus, masquerading as Lord and Savior...Leave. Us. Alone...Ahhhh this is Good News for all the children in the house today, I hope they can hear me on the playground, Jesus is interested in your 6 year old wisdom and welcomes who you are right now, not just who you could be later...Today, we say to Ageism disguised as Adults knowing better and having all the answers...Leave our Young People Alone ... this Gospel Passage is Good news for us all...Because it reminds us, there's not a part of us, Jesus isn't interested in welcoming...look at your neighbor and say **"All are welcome, and ALL OF YOU IS WELCOME..."**

Leave. Her. Alone...Jesus rebukes, his own disciples. In this moment, They were the ones who knew better, but she was the one who knew Jesus...I'll say that one more time, they, the disciples, were the ones that knew better, but she was the one who knew Jesus. Can I just encourage somebody here today, don't let the ones who insist they know better, talk you out of knowing Jesus. You are worthy, you are enough, and you don't need the validation of fancy institutions, God dwells in you...You are enough...They were the ones who knew better, but she was the one who knew Jesus...She knew what Jesus had done for her, when he called her brother Lazarus out from the tomb, and now in this moment she intuits, that Jesus will be on his way to a tomb of his own, and she anoints him. She anoints Jesus. Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, is anointed by Mary...Jesus, the Christ, the one whose title means anointed, is still anointed here, by Mary. With an expensive perfume, worth a year's salary. Like, okay, I can't front. If I saw that, I would have had a human moment myself. We, out here struggling, sleeping from house to house, and this whole time, you got rent and gas money for the whole year. Faaaam.... Ahhh but I believe Mary is prophetically calling us to something by "wasting" this perfume, and "wasting" this money, on Jesus...It's kind of like this...

On April 4th, 1967, just 1 year before his assassination, Dr.Martin Luther King delivered a historic speech even by his standard of speeches at Riverside Church in New York City, In his address now known as "Beyond Vietnam" King called out America for its hypocrisy and evil in the Vietnam War. He spoke at length condemning militarism, materialism, and racism, and

poverty. And he spoke about a need for a revolution, of values...and as he gets to heart of his discourse he says...

“We must rapidly begin the shift, from a thing oriented society, to a person oriented society...”

Ahhh Beloved, Mary’s act is prophetic, because she is embodying the shift, of what it looks like, to care more about a person, than to care about a thing...yes this perfume, is expensive, but this person named Jesus, is priceless...What’s a salary, to a Savior...and it’s not just true of Jesus, because he’s Jesus, it’s true of all of us, who bear the image of God, you are worth more, than the most expensive thing, that could ever roll up in here....Look at your neighbor and say “You are beyond expensive, you are priceless!”

You know that’s one of the reasons we felt we could come to All Saints. Ya’ll may have heard me tell this story...but back in 2020, after Anthony McClain was murdered by PPD, there were a number of folks out on the streets protesting for Black Lives, and the PPD, along with the LA county sheriff, had cornered these protesters, and backed them up against the wall, threatening them with mass arrests, so you had the police, protesters, and All Saints Church, and then I heard, cuz I was out of town, then I heard that All Saints, opened up the church gates, and told every protester, they could find sanctuary on the church property, and this is not to pat ourselves on the back, but when I saw that I thought oh, at least somebody up in that building, knows that Black Lives are worth more, than every single brick up in that building... it’s not that we don’t love this building, but Black Lives are worth way more than the building, and it’s not even close...that’s why we’re going to tell the whole story, about the all white iconography on our windows, it’s not because we don’t love the windows, but our Black Siblings, Our Indigenous Siblings, our Asian Siblings, our Latinx siblings on the other side of the windows, are worth way more than the windows....I’ll say it one more time, we are worth more, than the windows....I only been here about 15 minutes but I know it’s a sensitive subject...but it’s okay, we practicing courageous justice around here, and if you have any concerns, go ahead send me an email, my email address is ... mkinman@allSaints-pas.org. Send it there. But we need a revolution of values as a society ya’ll, I need a revolution of my own values, and Mary is helping us, she’s shifting the narrative...

Jesus says “it was right for her to do this, for my burial. You will always have the Poor among you, but you will not always have me.” I can’t front ya’ll that last line Jesus says, if this was Bible Jeopardy, it’d be like “things Jesus should not have said” for 600 Alex.

But what Jesus is saying, at least what I believe he’s saying, is that if you really want to pursue social progress and practice Justice, there’s a lifetime of work waiting for you. Bryan Stevenson famously said “most people think Rosa sat down on Friday, King Marched on Saturday, and civil rights was won on Sunday...” Dr.King also said, the arch of the moral universe is long, but it does bend toward Justice, but it is a longggg arch...and we’re the ones who have to bend it...”

But Jesus is saying if you truly want to participate, and not just have everyone think you want to, there is time, if you really about that life...

But in the mean time, Leave. Her. Alone. Church as I leave you today, I want you to notice, that in today's Gospel story, the only job the men in the passage have, is to not get in the way....the only job the ones who "know better" have, is to not get in the way...

So Church, I can't help but wonder, what would happen, if we followed Jesus's wisdom, and let women, specifically Black Women, and Black Trans Women, take up all the space they desired, without Cisgendered, Heterosexual Men, trying to push them back into the margins with patriarchy, misogynoir, and toxic masculinity

Church I can't help but wonder, what would happen, if we didn't get in the way, of our AAPI siblings taking up all the space they wanted, without trying to push them back into the margins with Asian Hate, and White Supremacist Folk Tales of the model minority

Church I wonder, what would happen, if we didn't get in the way, of our Latinx siblings taking up all the space they want, by listening to white supremacy's lies, that some people, belong here more than others...

Church I can't help but wonder, what would happen, if we didn't get in the way, of the Earth's ability to renew itself, and heal itself, with corporate greed that accelerates climate change, and climate injustice

I wonder what would happen, if there was a church, in Pasadena, on 132 N. Euclid Avenue, that was committed to not getting in the way, of what Jesus wanted to be done, but instead preached the Gospel, that All are Welcome, and All of you is welcome, and that people matter more than property

I wonder what would happen....