

**Be What We Believe**  
**Sunday, August 21, 2022, 10:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Mark Chase**

Church, I'll never forget the look on her face, it was the middle of a hot July day and there she stood, all alone, except for the young man accompanying her, who stood, towering over her on the sidewalk, yelling curse words and insults and berating her, at the very top of his lungs, all this while a long line of traffic and bystanders simply, watched, and as my car drew closer, I didn't know exactly what to do but I knew, I had to do...something, and so as I approached I, rolled down my window, made eye contact with them both, and began honking my horn as loud as I could to in effect signal to him that "somebody sees you, and somebody sees her, and somebody actually cares." He turned, looked at me, and then began to walk away in the opposite direction. And this young woman was left there, visibly shaken, and I simply said to her "Is there some place safe you need me to take you to?" And for a myriad of reasons, one of which presumably being my unfamiliar male body, not exactly representing safety in the moment she simply says "I'm okay, I'm okay."

And in the very next moment, the man she had been with comes back around, only this time, in a car, with about 5 other people in it, and he jumps out telling her to get in the car. And Church I wish in that moment I could tell you, that that's when I jumped out of my car, and that's when I, went full Steven Segal, disabling everyone in the vehicle with a series of non-lethal pressure point attacks, but I didn't....I stayed in my car, as he convinced her to get into his car, and they all drove off....And for me the most ironic thing about this story, is that the young lady in question, was a black woman, and just a few days earlier, I had purchased a T-Shirt with the phrase on the front that read in big Bold Letters..... "PROTECT. BLACK. WOMEN" A phrase I believed in with all my soul, and still believe in with all my soul, till this day, but you see with that moment, and this moment in today's Gospel story, I'm presented, and we are all presented, with the question,

**"What will we do, when life, as life so often does, Dares us to BE, everything that we say we BELIEVE"**

Jesus, is teaching, in the Synagogue, on The Sabbath, A revered and Holy Place, on a revered and Holy Day, now church this is not an occasion, for us as christians to feel superior to our Jewish siblings, because I believe in this text, A very Jewish Jesus, is pulling from his very Jewish roots and identity, Look at your neighbor and say "Hey now, Don't forget Jesus was Jewish"... perhaps Jesus was teaching on the Jewish principle of Tikkun Olam, which is the sense of responsibility rooted in Judaism, that we as human beings have a duty, to leave the world better off, than when we found it, and to participate in the healing, and repair of the world, perhaps Jesus is teaching on the creation story, in the Torah, in which we're told, that every human being, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, gender or sexuality, ability or religion, comes into the world stamped with the very image of God, or perhaps, Jesus is

drawing from the story of Cane and Abel, where it is revealed that we are one another's keeper, imagine Jesus getting on a roll as he's teaching, and drawing some Amens and some shouts, and everyone expecting that he's about to bring it on home and send everybody to chipotle happy, and instead he just....stops....he stops preaching a sermon and instead, decides to BE ONE. And he heals a woman, who has been beset by a spirit, for 18 years.....Now that's something to turn up over...but instead of joy, and shouting, and dancing and singing

The leader of the synagogue, interrupts the moment, and he starts questioning, loud enough for the whole room to hear, if this was the right way to do things, he interrupts the moment, because he thinks, that she's interrupting worship, but then, Jesus interrupts him right back, perhaps to let him, and the whole room wonder, that maybe this woman's presence, isn't INTERRUPTING Worship, but Maybe her very presence, is INITIATING Worship!!! Ahhhhh Cmon All Saints Church, there are times, when what we label, as the interruption, is Actually, The Worship, and what we label, as the worship, is actually, the Interruption!!! Look at your neighbor and say neighbor "Sometimes we get it twisted..."

And This synagogue leader, let's just call him Mike, since Mike's on sabbatical and can't object...Mike's not just grouchy, Mike's not just a hater...Mike didn't just wake up on the wrong side of the bed...Mike didn't just get his World for the day wrong....But Mike's reminding the people of something worthy, of their identity, and of the rules, and the systems, and symbols and traditions that go along with that, I mean after all again, This is the Sabbath, and the very good commandment to rest on the Sabbath, that the Jewish people received, upon being delivered, from forced labor camps in Egypt, that reminded them that they were human beings, and not just producers of capital for an Empire, was at the center of the conversation. You see ultimately, The Sabbath, was about People, the Sabbath, was about dignity, The Sabbath was about, LIFE, which is exactly, why in THIS MOMENT, JESUS BREAKS IT!!!! Or maybe, He Fulfills it!

As he elevates, the sanctity, of her situation, over the system, that they had created, around the Sabbath. And Jesus reminds them, and reminds us, that, people, aren't made to serve systems, but systems, are made to serve people, and that when presented with a conflict, instead of tearing down the people, in service of the system, we ought to tear down systems, in service of the people! Ahhhh Imma say that one more time, when presented with a conflict, instead of tearing down people, in service to the system, we ought to tear down systems, in service to the people.

The Sabbath was about life, and right in that Synagogue, was a woman, who desperately needed a people, who dared to actually BE, everything, that they said, they Believed!!!

All Saints Church I love our four core values, I just got done having a conversation about one of them, Ethical Stewardship, as a matter of fact, let me check on something can everyone name out loud our 4 core values.... POP QUIZ....I already gave you two big hints, I told you how many, and I just told you one of them.....Just yell em out, don't look on the website....Joyful Spirituality, Courageous Justice, and Radical Inclusivity.

Those are all the things we say we Believe, but let's just take 1, Radical Inclusivity, what would happen in the life of our church, and in the future of our church, if we dared to actually BE, what we said we Believed, when it came to radical inclusivity...Let's just take the word Radical, which, as Angela Davis reminds us, means to simply grasp things at the ROOT, and inclusivity, simply means providing equal access, to opportunities, and resources, especially to those who have been marginalized,. So at THE ROOT, of INCLUSIVITY, is equal access to opportunities, and resources, well what opportunities do we offer, let's just take Sunday morning, we offer opportunities to worship, in song, and through the beautiful iconography and decor of our sanctuary, BUT IF, we Dared to GRASP, INCLUSIVITY AT THE ROOT, and Actually became what we believed, and provided equal opportunities to worship, in Song, We might become a place, where we'd sing, as much Fred Hammond, accompanied by a Hammond B-3, as we sing Beethoven!

If we actually became, what we said, we believed, We might become a place, where when you looked up, that whoever you are, and wherever you found yourself on your journey of faith, the stained glass windows told you, that there was a place for you here! Ahhhh if we became, what we actually believed, instead of singing songs we already knew and liked in Spanish, we'd actually sing songs in Spanish, that were also Germaine to the religious and cultural experience of our Latinx siblings of various nationalities.....And you might say Chase, you gotta be careful because some of these things, touch at the very core, of what it means to be Episcopal, but what if we were so radically inclusive that we expanded what that even meant in the first place....And this ain't just about, having more different types of people, come through the door, and come to "our" church, why would we invite more people to come, if we're not surrendering, and changing the reasons that they don't??? Amen lights.... That, is what my Good friend, the REverend Dr. Bryson White called a few weeks ago, Predatory Inclusion. That's not radical inclusion, that's predatory inclusion....An inclusion for the purpose of consumption, exploitation and tokenism, that often leaves Black People, and other people of color, damaged and harmed in it's wake.

Now lest you think "Chase is on his high horse today" It's not a high horse it's more like a Pony, because if you remember i'm the guy from the story earlier that didn't get out of the car. So I'm not on my high horse. But as always, if you have any problems with anything I'm saying, I'm not running from any conversation, email me and we can set up a time to vigorously discuss these matters, My email address is [SHoward@AllSaints-Pas.org](mailto:SHoward@AllSaints-Pas.org)....

But All Saints Church I'm so glad, that our Faith, and our worship, and our community life as a church, isn't rooted in me, but is rooted in the one, who did get out of the car, and put himself directly, in harm's way, and he didn't go Steven Segal, but he surrendered and let the systems of this world Go Steven Segal on him, allowing the blows of Empire, Hate, and State Sanctioned Violence to reign down on his flesh, and not simply to be a substitute, but to be a prophetic example to the whole world, for all of time, that shows us, as Dr.King once said " that hate cannot drive out hate, but only love can do that, and that darkness, cannot drive out darkness,

but only light can do that.” And if you’re wondering for a moment who I’m talking about, his name is Jesus

The same Jesus, who saw a woman whose back had bent, for 18 years, sees the places where our backs have been bent, in this moment, and offers healing, liberation, and wholeness

Ahhh this same Brown Jesus, who lived the Black Experience, Offers healing and liberation, To those people of African Descent here in America, whose backs have been bent by Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy

This same Jesus who was pushed out of Jerusalem, offers healing and liberation, To our Indigenous Siblings pushed into reservations on the land they cultivated, Backs Bent by Genocide and Demonization

This same Jesus, who was fixed to a cross, offers healing and liberation To the countless women, and specifically women of color, who find themselves fixed, inside the cross hairs of patriarchy and racism,

This same Jesus, who was treated like a foreigner, in the land of his origin, offers healing and liberation, to our Asian Siblings here in America, who are constantly treated as the perpetual foreigner, no matter their history and legacy

To our LGBTQ siblings, whose backs have been bent, by the Theology of the church, due to whom you cannot help but love, Jesus offers healing and liberation, as one, who was also persecuted, over whom he chose to love, that being, all of us.

Jesus stands, and says may every system, that stands in the way, of you, and the abundant life I have created you to live, be torn down, in service, to your salvation, and wholeness

Because in Jesus, we have the one, who BE-CAME one of us, who BE-CAME the very object of his love and affection, and he sees us as people groups, and he sees us as people, Beloved Jesus is not too pre-occupied, to see you my friend! I don’t know what you brought in to church this morning, I don’t know what you’ve been carrying and holding, but just close your eyes, and I’m closing this is the end, I promise.... I wouldn’t have you close your eyes and keep preaching another 27 minutes, I’d just preach another 17.... But just close your eyes and whatever point of pain or suffering you’ve been navigating, Imagine Jesus stopping everything, and tending to your need, right in that spot, Maybe it’s Anti-Blackness, Maybe it’s Misogynoir and Misogyny, Maybe it’s your mental health, maybe your kids are just off the chain right now, maybe it’s physical, I don’t know, but just imagine Jesus seeing you, feeling you, and stopping everything, and ministering to that place....Just take a deep breath in.....Hold it, take a deep breath out....Let’s just take 30 seconds, and imagine Jesus stopping everything, because he sees you, because you, are worth stopping for...

May our breath serve as our prayer....this morning. In the name of the Great Healer Jesus we pray, Amen!