

Get the Hell Up Outta Here
Third Sunday in Lent, March 12, 2022, 10:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Mark Chase

Happy Sunday wonderful people. This morning I want to encourage us and preach from the title, "Get, the Hell, up outta here..." ahhhhh that's right, "Get, the Hell, up outta here..." turn to your neighbor, and say neigh....bor....lol! "Get, the Hell, up outta here..." Find somebody else that you been wanting to say these EXACT words too for a long time..."Get, the Hell, comma, up outta here." Has there ever been a more important comma in a church service...and I know, just a couple of weeks ago, Mike Kinman preached a brilliant sermon, urging us, to Come Back, and here I am.....saying, not that..."Get, The Hell, Up outta here."

Many works have been written, entire theologies crafted, movies, book series, Sermon series on the subject of hell, and many theologies and codes of ethics and sitcoms, like NBC's The Good Place, which is really incredible if you haven't seen it, have been devoted to not only the subject of Hell but to perhaps the more important subject of How to Stay out of Hell, We all want to know that, Hell is Bad and lasts a really long time, so we're really interested on being told, how not to end up there....

Ahhhh but the Teaching's and Life of Jesus, don't offer us as much wisdom and instruction on how to stay out of hell, as much as they do on how to Get Hell, out of the places we stay! Imma say that one more time because I know the clock just went forward and we might not be at Full Capacity, The teachings and life of Jesus, don't offer us as much wisdom and instruction on how to stay out of hell, as much as they do on how to Get Hell, out, of the places where we stay!

Jesus paints the picture of Gihenna, which was an allusion to a literal place, a trash heap, that would burn just outside of the edge of town, a place where child sacrifices used to happen, that was now burning and burning, that would play host, to explosions of fire from time to time, It burned and it stunk, and Jesus says, imagine that place, burning, and stinking, and rotting, and exploding... inside your soul, and inside your heart, or inside the soul, and heart of your sibling, so instead of being the Praise and Worship Department or the liturgy and music department, I need you right now, to be the Fire Department, and go help your neighbor, put the fire out, and Get the Hell, up out of their heart...and Get the Hell, up out of your own heart, if there is any..." Jesus brings up the picture of a fire, because That's how urgent this is...When a fire needs to be put out, everything else becomes a secondary priority. I know it's Oscar season and we just had Ken Turan in the forum, so Imagine sitting in a movie theater, watching the best picture of the year, which in my opinion is everything, everywhere, all at once...i know, some of us prefer, all white on the western front, i mean all quiet, on the whitest, front...but let's go with it...and as good as everything, everywhere, all at once is, imagine a fire breaks out in the theater, and everybody, just. Keeps. watching. the movie...eating. the. popcorn...You would scream at the top of your lungs, c'mon everybody, there's a fire, we gotta do like Chase's sermon title and GET, the....see in that context it's a cuss word so i won't say it...when a fire breaks out, it doesn't matter what else is happening, everything else can wait, everything else takes a back seat...Until the Fire, is extinguished...and Jesus says even our worship can take a seat in the

back, until love of our neighbor takes a seat, in the front! Ahhh Jesus is also saying this, to a people, oppressed by The Hell, of The Roman Empire, and him saying this to them, is in effect him also saying to us, that The just because there is Hell All AROUND YOU, doesn't mean there has to be HELL, INSIDE YOU!!! Ahhh that's Good News, to all the marginalized people in this room today, there may be the Hell, of systemic injustice, all around us, pressing into us, but we don't have to BECOME, THE HELL THAT IS OPPOSING US...

So Jesus paints the picture, he says i know you are disturbed and in fear of this hell, but let me tell you that this place called hell, exists all over this place called earth. And today as a preacher, full disclosure, i'm actually not here to convince you, to take Hell less seriously, i'm actually here to convince you, to take hell, more seriously, because hell is closer than we think, and more ubiquitous than we think, and the heat of its flames, aren't rhetorical or reserved for the hereafter, but the heat of its flames actually have a wake of bodies in the here and now, in its aftermath....But we're so busy theologizing, and philosophizing, and agonizing over a hell that ain't nobody ever seen, touched, or tasted, that we miss the Hells, all over this world, that people see, touch, and taste, every single day, and that start right in our hearts.

That's why Jesus in this scripture says, thank you for the oblations, thank you for the offering, thank you for the song, but instead of the sound of the organ, there are times when God wants to hear the sound, of the sirens, as we transform into the Divine Fire Department, blaring the sirens of repentance, fire hoses filled to the brim, with forgiveness...

The year, was 1997, and there was a devoutly religious man, who was partly in charge of some crucially important proceedings that were underway, in his home country. He was partly responsible for helping decide the future of his people and his nation, as it looked back, to face the past, and stare into the belly, of the most horrific atrocities, crimes and murders... in it's history. And though his nation's history was filled with hate and murder, the path forward that he chose, was filled with forgiveness...

And in the midst of all that forgiveness, this devoutly religious man was asked the question... "Don't you think, that granting a murderer amnesty, which is a form of forgiveness...even if he doesn't repent, don't you think this is carrying Christianity a bit too far..?" And to that question, the late ArchBishop Desmond Tutu responded by saying "Christianity, has always been a religion, that takes risks....and that declares, that even those who've committed the most monstrous acts, are themselves, not monsters..."

Ahhhh, you want to talk about accepting the call to be a part of the Divine Fire Department, ArchBishop Desmond Tutu, for years, stood on the front line, extinguishing the flames of Apartheid, Getting The Hell, known as white supremacy and segregation, Up Out of, South Africa...

And perhaps the greater lesson from ArchBishop Tutu, even in the face of his courageous, justice filled, rage filled, peace filled, yes rage and peace can co-exist in the same body, in the midst of all those courageous stands against apartheid, perhaps the greatest lesson, that we

can glean from his life, is how he so obviously, through his love and his unforgettable laughter in the face of evil, was that before he attempted to extinguish the flames, of the Hell, known as Apartheid, he had so obviously, already dealt with, any flames of Hell, that existed, in his own heart....He knew it was vitally important, to put the fire out, in his own soul, while he did the work of justice, to put the fire out, in his own society....He had Gotten The Hell, up out, of his own heart...while he attempted to Get Hell, out of his own country....Sometimes it takes more courage, to stand up to the Hell inside our souls, than it does to stand up to the Hell inside any system.

Point to your chest....Point to your chest...Now look at your neighbor again and say neighbor "We gotta get The Hell, Up Outta Here.."

Which begs the question, How Chase??? How Sway??? If I'm honest I have to admit, I don't have a formula, i'm a preacher not a therapist, for a preacher who is also a therapist, and has the formula, if there is one... please continue to email, SHoward@allsaints-pas.org.....i don't have a formula...

And I don't know if it's as much about asking ourselves what's the formula, as much as it's about asking ourselves, what's our future??? And What kind of future do we want? And what kind of future do we want to live in??? What kind of people do we want to be, in that future??? And when we begin to imagine that future together in community, God will begin to make a way....

Now let me make an important aside...because this is a hard invitation, as my streak of getting the most difficult passages to preach on continues...Let me make an important aside...Jesus isn't saying we don't get to have boundaries, Jesus isn't saying we don't get to have a good therapist who tells us, if they call trying to be in your life again don't answer...matter of fact block their number... Jesus isn't telling us we don't get to keep ourselves safe, physically, emotionally and psychologically...Jesus isn't telling us we don't get to have a process, that might take a really long time...Jesus also isn't telling us to forgive and forget, because not only is forgetting actually impossible, but as Rabbi Sheri Hersch says "we need to forget forgetting, because if we forget what happened, we also forget any lesson that may have been IN WHAT HAPPENED..." But what Jesus is telling us, is that we don't get to have, pieces of hell burning in our hearts towards another human being. We don't get to have that, that's why he equates anger to murder, because what inevitably ends up happening, is that when we have those pieces of hell burning within us, we will inevitably send that hell, through other human beings, and most of the time, not even the ones who harmed us....

Resma Manekem...Talks about this reality in his groundbreaking work entitled "My GrandMother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to mending our hearts and bodies..." He talks about this reality when he details the history of European Americans....specifically the English, before they arrived here, on this land...He says "The 1500's and 1600's in England were anything but gentle times. People were routinely burned at the stake for heresy...torture was an official instrument of the English government until 1640. The

Famous tower of London was, in part, a torture chamber. One of many torture devices in the Tower, the rack, was used to stretch human bodies, and pull them apart...Going back to the middle ages in England, torture wasn't just wildly popular, it was a spectator sport..." He goes on to say further "It is not hard to understand why so many people from England fled to the American colonies. Fleeing is, of course, a survival response...many of the english who colonized america had been brutalized, or had witnessed brutality first-hand. Others were the children and grandchildren of people who had experienced such savagery in England...he goes on to say "Barbarism, was not the only reason to flee England. The Great Plague raged through much of the country in 1665 and 1666, killing an estimated 100,000 people in London alone...Many English immigrants were desperately trying to get away from poverty, starvation, and overcrowding, and for all the talk of the New Jerusalem, The Pilgrims and Puritans were not explorers, but were refugees fleeing imprisonment, torture, and mutilation." He concludes by saying "Throughout the United States history as a nation, white bodies have colonized, oppressed, brutalized, and murdered Black and Indigenous bodies. But well before the United States began, powerful white bodies colonized, oppressed, brutalized, and murdered other, less powerful white ones. The carnage perpetrated on Black and Indigenous people in the "new world" began, on the same soil, as an adaptation of longstanding white on white practices. This brutalization created trauma, that has yet to be healed among white bodies, today." Friends, whole nations suffer, when we don't confront the hell that sits within our own souls.

Let's just take a deep breath in on that one...and let it out....

See we Gotta Get The Hell, up out, of this nation's foundation...that's why the conversation of reparations is so important because at the end of the reconciliation process, that people like to skip, is repair, or amendment of life, that completes the process. Right here in Pasadena we are doing just that, with the work of the 710 committee, to amend and repair, the lives and the losses, suffered by Black and Latino residents who were displaced out of their homes, for a literal bridge to nowhere....you see we're invited to build as well. But we can't build, if there's a fire still burning...

We can't worship, if there's a fire still burning, and we can't love God, if there's a fire still burning towards our neighbor...That's why in this story, it looks like, the worshiper is actually turned away ...ahhh but The Good News is, the person in the story is not actually turned away, but the person in the story, is actually turned towards, turned back towards what God values most, another human being, created in God's image..

here at All Saints, we say every Sunday, in the context of communion, this is Jesus's table and Jesus, never turned anyone away, that's why we can come to this table, with joy, and confidence, because at this table, we are never turned away, and, and, at this table, we are always turned towards, what this table is all about, the love of God, and every single one of us, who are all loved, by God...

And it is upon that foundation of divine grace and acceptance, that the Spirit of the living God, has a question for all of us in this room this morning, She wants to know,

Is there anybody willing, to join the Fire Department, of The Kingdom of God,

Extinguishing the flames of hell, all over this world,

Extinguishing the flames of bitterness and unforgiveness, Getting The Hell known as hate, up out, of our very own hearts

And as we extinguish the Hell, in our very own souls, we can go in Faith, Hope, and Love, to extinguish the Hell, in our own society

Extinguishing the Flames of racism,
Getting the Hell, known as white supremacy, up out of our communities and even up out of our very own church

Extinguishing the flames of patriarchy, Getting the Hell, known as sexism, mysogony, and mysogynoir, up out, of our institutions and communities

Extinguishing the flames of anti-trans legislation, getting the hell known known as trans-phobia, up out of government

Are there any Divine Firefighters in the house this morning???