

**The Jesus Who Isn't Trapped**  
**Sunday, April 30, 2023, 10:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Mark Chase**

Just look at your neighbor and “say neighbor, we really gotta start that petition for Chase....” And if you’re in here or watching online and you have no idea what’s happening, just go look back at my last 6 sermons -- not right now, stay with me right now, but just go look back at my last 9 sermons, and you’ll see, I keep getting the most obscure, and ridiculous passages, and to this day, no petition has been started for me, but today, finally, I have a feeling that as the prophet Sam Cooke once said, a change is going to come, Psalm 23, and John 3:16, are in my future, I can feel it...

Beloved in today’s Gospel, we find Jesus, in a very similar situation to that in which we find him in today. In this passage, we find Jesus, caught between religious and political leadership who earlier in the passage, were offended and threatened by Jesus’s prophetic witness, and wisdom. You see Jesus had started preaching, and some things had started landing, and some things had started landing, a little too close to home. Jesus had begun to tell one of his parables as only he could (being a master story teller), and the religious and political leadership began to lean in, and they pulled out their popcorn, and they said oh this is a good movie, and they poured some extra butter over the top of their popcorn, and started enjoying the movie that Jesus was narrating, only to realize halfway through the movie, that the whole thing was actually all about them, and not only was the movie all about them, but they were not the heroes.

The words, and indeed the very life of Jesus, had become a threat to their authority, and so now, we find them in this passage trying to get Jesus, out of the way. But they can’t do it, in a way that’s too obvious, because Jesus is too popular, he had a blue check on twitter, back when that meant something, he gets re-tweeted a lot, and his tik-tok is blowin up, and an entire crowd has gathered just to hear him speak and to see him heal, so they can’t just take him out, in broad daylight...so they decide that if they can’t go after Jesus, they’ll have to go after Jesus’s authority, and they’ll go after Jesus’s authority, by making him look incompetent, and so they set up, a little thought experiment for Jesus, they devise a trap. And it’s a good trap ya’ll! A fool proof trap! They ask Jesus this seemingly absurd question, about a woman who had 7 husbands, all brothers, who all end up dying, not for dramatic effect or to set up a lifetime movie, but as a reference to the law given by Moses, that if a man died without children, according to the law, it was his brothers responsibility to carry on the family name, this is in Leviticus you know, another example as to why if you hear people talking about Biblical Marriage, chances are they haven’t encountered all the biblical possibilities of what that could mean but I digress...so apparently this happens 7 times..., and now they ask Jesus, Jesus, you believe in the resurrection, in this little resurrection, whose wife is she really...it’s an absurd question on a couple levels which we’ll get to, but for them, the absurdity of the question, matches in their minds the absurdity of this thing called the resurrection....they think the idea of the resurrection itself, is absurd, they think the idea that after people die, they come back from the dead, is unthinkable, they think the idea, that after death has spoken, there is still

more to be said, even if that more is being said by God, is unconscionable, they think the possibility, that the ultimate ending, could ultimately lead to a brand new beginning is bananas, so the trap, is to get Jesus to pick a husband for this woman, I know some of us are like that's the trap, Jesus please pick my husband and do it quickly it's rough out here in these streets, some of us have been left unhinged by hinge, don't raise your hand just blink...there is prayer available in the chapel and the baptistry during communion...but in the story, in the story, the trap is to get Jesus to pick a husband, for this woman, because of course regardless of which husband Jesus picks, he'll have picked the wrong one, because someone in the story will be committing adultery because after all, she was married, to all 7, so no matter whose wife she becomes, theres a dilemma, and then if Jesus can't pick a husband for her, since it will in theory be adultery, he'll have to admit, that after all, the resurrection is an untenable and ridiculous idea, and we should all go home and watch Love is Blind on Netflix...

Ahhhh but you gotta love Jesus, look at your neighbor and say "Neighbor, You gotta love Jesus." Ahhhhh find another neighbor Because that neighbor did not believe you and say "neighbor, you gotta love Jesus" because in one sentence, Jesus exposes what's actually going on, and it has nothing to do with marriage, and everything to do, with a lack of imagination, and belief in the power and story of God....Jesus essentially tells them that the problem here is not about who gets to be married to who, ahhh cmon in here somebody, don't ever let somebody tell you that the real problem is about who is married to who, Jesus essentially exposes their focus on marriage, as a red herring, and says the real issue, is you're trying to hold onto your power, but in trying to hold onto your power, you have underestimated, and misunderstood, the power of your God! The question on marriage was a smokescreen, ain't nothin new under the sun...

You see they were asking Jesus a question, that actually wasn't based on the resurrection into new life, but was actually based on the resuscitation, of the old life...ahhhh i'm going to say it one more time, i wrote this at 1 a.m. so there might be some stuff that don't make alot of sense,they were asking Jesus a question, that actually wasn't based on the resurrection into new life, but was actually based on the resuscitation, of the old life, they had limited God, and assumed that the best God could do, even though they didn't believe it, they assumed that the best God could do, was to resuscitate the status quo, but the resurrection, isn't about resuscitating the status quo, it's about re-imagining a whole new world, in which even the status quo itself has to bow down, and a whole new life and a whole new world emerges....it's the difference between going to the gym, and working up a good sweat, and then going straight to dinner with some friends, but instead of taking a shower, you just spray on some cologne, don't raise your hands if you've ever done it, just blink, thank you I see those blinks...you see the Saducees for all of their brilliance, they thought the resurrection, was about spraying some cologne on top of some old funk, but Jesus reminds them and reminds us, that the Good News, is that God is not in the business of spraying cologne on top of old funk, but the resurrection power of God, means that there's a whole shower coming, a shower of hope, peace, joy, mercy, grace, renewal, liberation, justice, wholeness, ahhhh The Good News, is that Jesus reveals, that the imagination of God, is even bigger than our imagination can fathom, Look at your neighbor and say neighbor, "there's a shower in your future..."

And he says look, don't you understand that there's a world coming, and that is already here, with so much peace, and so much love, that not even the best marriage will be able to contain it and grasp it...that not even the best marriage, will be able to encapsulate it's joy! He says you've got to understand, that there's a whole new world coming, so don't ask me about whose wife she will be, because there's a world coming, and that is now already here, where you'll understand, that your whole premise is off, because the world that you're in, and that your God operates in, is assuming that a woman is property, to be passed down, but there's a world coming, and that is now already here, in which you will get the revelation, that women are not the property of patriarchy, but are full image bearers of The Divine. Jesus says imagine a world where the woman in this story says, I don't want to marry none of ya'll, I'm on this new app, called Hinge!

You see what Jesus is doing let me talk. Where are the places where we are expecting a resuscitation of the status quo, but Jesus is offering resurrection and new life? In this country, what are the systems and institutions, that even well meaning people, are trying to resuscitate...instead of believing in resurrection and new life...Let me make it plain, Beloved... I'm afraid, that we keep trying to resuscitate, policing, we keep trying to reform, policing, but what if Jesus is offering resurrection and new life, and asking us to imagine and advocate for, and build a world, where we all have the resources we need and because of that, we live in a world where the police aren't needed...because if you study history, police are not a part of the fabric of society, but the system was created to manage inequity, and as a physical line of defense, for white supremacy, but imagine a world where there was so much justice and equity, that we didn't need police to manage the fall out, from the in-equity.....so i'm not just trying to abolish the police, but i'm trying to abolish the world in which we need the police....imagine that world, that's the difference between resuscitation and resurrection. I know beloved if you're anything like me, you might be a hot mess on a good day, but where are the places in our personal lives, that if we're honest, we think the best that God can do, if God can even do anything, is resuscitate the old thing, and not bring resurrection power, and life, to do a completely new thing??? I hope this makes sense like I said i wrote it, at 3 a.m. Look at your neighbor and say neighbor "Is this making sense."

Beloved, as I get ready to close, I mentioned at the beginning that we find Jesus in this passage, in a similar situation that we find him in today...Beloved don't we find Jesus caught today, caught between religious and political leaders, who are offended and threatened by the prophetic witness of Jesus, who seek to silence Jesus, and get him up out of the way. But because of his popularity, know they can't dismiss him outright, so they seek to trap, and co-opt his message, and entire existence. Beloved, there are people, still in the business, of TRAPPING JESUS...for the purpose of getting him out of the way, to preserve their own standing and power.

Ahhhh but the Good News today beloved, is that same Jesus, who would not be trapped back then, is the same Jesus, who will not be Trapped right now,

Ahhh The Good News today, is that if anyone, is having trouble, differentiating the real Jesus, from the Jesus in whose name so much harm is being done, Just look for the Jesus that will not be trapped.

The Good news is Church, that our hope, especially in times like these, is not found in the Jesus who is trapped in Patriarchy, but in the Jesus who is liberated and seeks to liberate, all people from Gender based violence and oppression,

The Good News is Church, that our hope, especially on a day like today, is not found in the Jesus who is trapped in Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Immigrant Legislation, and Xenophobia, but in the brown Jesus, who lived the Black Experience, and was himself considered an outsider,

The Good News is Church, that our hope today, is not found in the Jesus, who is trapped in Homophobia, and Transphobia, but in the Jesus whose greatest commandment was love, and who never condemned anyone, over whom they could not help but love, especially when that person was themselves,

The Good News is, is that Jesus still refuses to be trapped by the systems and powers of this world. Ahhh Beloved, when you get to the free Jesus, you can be sure you've gotten, to the real Jesus...

And now, I want to end on a good note, but I'm feeling led by The Spirit of God to end, on a prophetic note, a note of curiosity, where are the places, here at All Saints Church, where if we are honest, in spite of our desire and intention to walk with the revolutionary Jesus, Jesus remains trapped,

Where we're not walking with the free Jesus, who frees people, we just had a forum on the psychological damage of all white iconography to people of color, beloved, right here at All Saints, Jesus is trapped in All White Iconography, and I know, nobody here did it, nobody here shaped the glass, stained it and put it in a place, but like Isabelle Wilkerson said, this is not the problem we've created, and it's STILL our responsibility to fix it...It is not enough to sing songs, and preach sermons about justice, while injustice preaches and sings to us, before anyone has ever said a word...where are the other places, at All Saints Church, that if we're honest, we're settling for resuscitation, when Jesus is still offering, resurrection...

Amen.