

April 3, 2022

**“Minding Our Own Business”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*Isaiah 43:18-21*

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.*

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

*I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

*The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches;*

*for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert,*

*to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.*

*John 12:1-8*

*Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."*

**Sermon “Minding Our Own Business”**

About a year ago I heard my Mom say how much she loved the smell of channel #5. I had memories flooding back from when I was a kid and I can still smell that beautiful aroma when she put it on for special occasions. Dad would buy it for her and say it was from all of us for Mother's day and such, so I had no idea how much it cost.

So last year when she said that, I took note and thought, I'm going to get that for her upcoming birthday. So when we got home, I hopped on the internet and was shocked that it cost about \$350 dollars an ounce now. Needless to say, she ended up with a Walmart gift card and a scarf instead.

But this year, as she faces the recurrence of cancer. I would pay every penny I had if it showed her how much I love her, how much I would miss her and how important she has been in my life.

I think this is what is happening in this story. Mary is overcome with the need to make sure Jesus doesn't die without knowing how much he means to her. What a difference he's made in her life. So she anointed his feet with expensive perfume and dried them lovingly with her hair.

Now Judas has something to say about this and Jesus calls him out for it. “Leave her alone” he says, basically telling him to mind his own business. In this retelling by John, the gospel writer also calls out the hypocrisy of Judas, saying within the scripture “he doesn’t care about the poor he just wants to be able to steal more from the common purse”. So it’s not certain if Jesus is mad at Judas for the hypocrisy or for sticking his nose where it didn’t belong. Either way, he told him to stay out of it.

So how does this woman know that Jesus was going to die? Either she has some kind of precognition or she is just playing the odds. He was a minority man who was speaking truth to power, to the religious and political leaders, in a time when dissidents were routinely executed by the Roman empire. The odds are you are not long for this world.

I have a feeling that this is how Dr. King’s wife, Coretta felt every time he walked out the door, or Gandhi’s wife, or any one of the Kennedy wives. This is how humanity has often dealt with its prophets and truth tellers. And Jesus certainly knows it, but because of who he is, he does it anyway. He keeps saying things that need to be said and is prepared to die for the truth.

I have been thinking a lot about this lately. About how so many of our problems both on a relational and national level are because people don’t mind their own business. Especially political and religious leaders who somehow want to twist the truth, whose rage is so palpable because they don’t want things to change. But the truth is they already have.

The Judases of our day want to take us back to some idyllic version of what our country used to be. When men were men and women submissive to them. Where everyone was assumed to be Christian. Where no one talked about sexuality or gender identity, where you could wish everyone a “Merry Christmas” and not be judged.

But folks, that world didn’t exist then and it certainly can’t exist now. Because in that world some women were getting beaten and had no legal recourse, gays had to hide in the shadows because they were considered criminal, trans people existed but just lived silently in the pain of not being who they knew they were. And we all know how minorities were and are treated.

We can’t get back to a place that never existed for everyone and how many of our problems would just go away if we all just minded our own business. Is it anybody’s business in Florida if parents decide to love their children just the way God created them? Is it anybody’s business what your religion is?

Is it anyone’s business how short or long someone else’s hair is or what color they dye it, or how they dress. Is it anybody’s business what choices people make about their own lives?

The only time anything is our business is if what someone is causing harm to someone else. I have to ask myself when I start to judge someone's choices, “is it causing any harm?” If the answer is no then it is simply not my business.

Jesus tells us what our business is, our business is suffering. Jesus tells us that our business is poverty, our business is injustice. Like the continued racism, the hate crimes, child abuse, sex trafficking, the torturous practice of conversion therapy, the extremely high incidence of suicide among our LGBT kids, and the destruction of our Earth. Because those things are harming people and all the inhabitants of our only home.

My business is also looking at myself and asking myself if my actions are loving and kind? Are they things I would do if I was doing them in front of Jesus?

There seems to be a wave of backlash in this country that has us in its angry, fearful grip. Don't underestimate it. A wave of judgment of everybody else's choices and how they live.

And so much of this is being done under the guise of Christianity and that just breaks my heart. In the two thousand year history of the church we are faced with the greatest threat it's ever known.

It's the same threat that was in that very room with Jesus as he was being anointed with love by Mary. It's the hypocrisy that Judas showed that day.

We have a whole generation of young people that are just done with religion. They are done with the hypocrisy they see in the press of so many Christian churches. They aren't stupid. They see the disconnect between saying "love your neighbor", "judge not, lest you be judged", then excluding and condemning their friends of color, and their gay and trans friends.

They notice the non sequitur of Jesus caring about the poor and some Christian Politicians saying that it's their fault that they're poor in the first place. They see the hypocrisy of Jesus standing up for children in our scriptures and then witnessing the clergy abuse scandals and cover-ups.

It is why it is so important that we become louder than the voices of Christian nationalism. That we shout over the hateful noise, "Come over here, you are welcome here! That isn't who Jesus was, you are lovable, and they are wrong."

This scene set in John has so much truth in it. You see two options. We can choose the path of abundant and generous love like Mary, or we can choose the path of judgment, hypocrisy and greed like Judas.

We are all usually a blend of both, but Jesus gives us a goal, a truly idyllic notion of a better world that can actually be a reality. He reminds us that God is doing a thing. That isn't the world behind us but a world that has yet to be. Our business is creating that world.

Where we can love lavishly and care about the poor. A world that is equitable, free from violence and hate. A world where we try to give our best to each other and to God and let that love shape our actions and who we become and who our children become. Let our attempts at love and non-judgment of each other give hope and joy to ourselves and everyone we meet. AMEN

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