



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: CHRIST THE KING, NOVEMBER 21, 2021
2 SAMUEL 23:1-7; PSALM 132:1-13; REVELATION 1:4b-8; JOHN 18:33-37

GOD IS CALLING US TO DO SOMETHING

The Expectancy of Action

John 18:33-77 [Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."]

33 Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him. 34 Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." 37 Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. **Actually, I was born and**

came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

I am of a firm belief, that God is calling the church to do something. There is an expectancy by God for the church to make a difference in the fabric of everyday life. For example, God did not establish the church to merely, though important, hold regular worship services, uphold our traditions of the faith, be reminded of our Christianity through the liturgy, and to observe the catechism of our beliefs.

While these are important, God is calling us to do more than that. I believe God has an expectancy that the Church Universal, is to do more than hold internal rituals, but that we are to make external positive impacts.

- Socially
- Spiritually
- Psychologically
- Equitably
- In terms of acknowledging the gift of diversity
- Inclusion – where there is space at the table for the haves as well as the have nots and for the white collar, blue collar, and the no collar everyday people.

In the text of John 18:33-37, Jesus and Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, under the Emperor Tiberius, are in a complex conversation. **LOOK AT IT WITH ME...** Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. “Are you the king of the Jews?” he asked him.

34 Jesus replied, “Is this your own question, **or are you just repeating what others told you about me?**” 35 “Am I a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, **“My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom.”**

In other words, Jesus is saying, I’m not here to go along and to get along. Nor am I here to look at the injustices in our world and say how bad it is... but do nothing. I’m not here to say, I’ve got mine – you get yours.

No. When Jesus says, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom,” believers should likewise accept the challenge to say, “I live in the world, but I am not of the world.” We should want to do our part to change/transform our global post-modern world by doing our part to right the wrongs that we see, give a voice to the voiceless, and hope for the hopeless.

It starts with us. If not us – then who? If not now – then when?

If we are to be about Our Father’s business then we realize that, **GOD IS CALLING US TO DO SOMETHING** and there is an expectation of Action by God’s people who are Called by His name.

Today, my friends, I have a declaration for us: This is the last Sunday of Ordinary Time on the Christian calendar. And God is calling us – all of us – to be ordinary no more! We are God’s people, a peculiar people, but yet in still, a royal priesthood. We have the Spiritual DNA of our Creator, who when creation was established declared – “It is Good.”

Humanity, in all of our attempts to do it right and get it right – have failed miserably and have tarnished what God has created. We have tarnished:

- **The ecosystem** – water (Flint, MI), wildlife, natural resources
- **Our sense of what is Right and wrong, good and bad, and what is just and unjust.** Where it’s right to intentionally go to a city with an assault rifle and wind up killing 2

people in a city that's already in dire distress behind a questionable shooting, only to be found innocent under the claim of self-defense – because people were trying to take your weapon away to reduce the level of harm.

- But it's wrong in the case of Ahmaud Arbery for black pastors to come to Brunswick, GA to support a grieving mother and her family whose son was stopped, accosted, interrogated, and ultimately shot down like an animal for jogging in a neighborhood where some people hadn't seen him before.

I'm using the Christian calendar phrase metaphorically, but God is calling us to be more than just Ordinary – **God is calling us to make a difference!**

How do we do it/this?

1. Recognize – Our kingdom is not an earthly kingdom; we are in the world but not of the world. Stanley Hauerwas, a noted theologian and ethicist, puts it this way, in his book, *Resident Aliens*. The Christian is put in this world to change the world.
2. Know Why You're Here – This is what Jesus said, in the Gospel of John 18:37, when he said, **“Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth.”**

God didn't take time to make you, shape you, mold you for nine months just to take up

space. You were made for purpose. You were made to do something. We, too, have come into the world to testify to the truth!

To make a difference we must do three things:

I. Acknowledge History:

Let's start with the Thanksgiving Story with the Pilgrim settlers at Plymouth, MA.

The true story of Thanksgiving is a bloody one where Natives and the settlers were at war after a peace treaty had failed. Disease from the Europeans nearly wiped out the Native tribes and the settlers took their land as the Natives were dying from disease. The Natives were actually taken advantage of and were stripped of their native lands that they had cared for and cultivated.

The truth of the matter is that America was built on the backs of Natives and enslaved black people. America's founding was brutal, harsh, inhumane, and detestable. For the Africans our languages were taken, our customs were taken, our names were changed, and Natives were ravaged by disease. We must acknowledge the truth of America's history!

II. Respect History:

We must not deny what happened – but let the truth be known so that it can be addressed. Critical Race theory is telling the story like it is. America must tell its story as it is! WE MUST FACE IT TO FIX

IT. America must make restorative justice a reality where the tables can be leveled, and the rules are the same.

Saint Mark's recognition of the Duwamish Tribe, which is the tribe that settled Seattle, is a prime example of how we recognize and respect history.

III. Dismantle the Untruths of our history

People are not to be disenfranchised because they are either Black or white, rich or poor, gay or straight, employed, under-employed, or unemployed.

We must unravel this tangled web of deception and treat people as equals as Children of God. Remember, the Lord's Prayer starts off with "Our Father...", which means we are related, we are brothers and sisters, and we share the same God as our parent. We are woven together as people of God who share the same DNA. When you hurt – I hurt. When you are bruised – it bruises me as well.

HOW DO WE DO SOMETHING AND WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT?

As Ordinary Time is over, the season changes to Advent, which represents a holy expectancy. God expects us to be involved in:

1. Community engagement

In her book, *Church in the Round*, Letty Russell, a feminist theologian, envisions a future that is about developing partnerships and sharing where all members can assemble around a common table where everyone is equal and share the same space at the table.

2. Accessibility and Clarity

We must be intentional about welcoming and listening to the other's story. By the sharing of stories we come to know our neighbor and form relationships where we become more than strangers, but acquaintances, then friends, and at last, family.

3. Develop Racial Equity Strategies

Where power is shared, encouraged, and even promoted.

Jesus said, "I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth." This is our call today. What were you born for? God called you to do something and God has an expectancy of Action.