

"BUSINESS AS USUAL....."

**A SERMON BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
(2:13-22) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON
MARCH 7, 2021----THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

**"BUT HE WAS SPEAKING OF THE TEMPLE OF HIS
BODY" (JOHN 2:21).**

**THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE THAT DAY DID NOT GET
THAT.... THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT HE
WAS TALKING ABOUT THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY
BECAUSE THEY WERE ABOUT BUSINESS AS
USUAL.....**

**IT WAS BUSINESS AS USUAL THAT DAY JESUS
SHOWED UP AT THE TEMPLE.... ANIMALS WERE
BEING BOUGHT AND SOLD..... COINS WERE
BEING CHANGED..... ALL THE USUAL PEOPLE
HAD THEIR USUAL PLACES AND USUAL ROLES.**

**THIS IS ONE OF THOSE STORIES WHERE WE
NEED TO SET ASIDE A COUPLE OF THINGS---
THINGS DON'T BELONG---- THINGS THAT
DISTRACT---- BEFORE WE CAN REALLY
UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING.....**

***WE NEED TO SET ASIDE WHAT WE HAVE OFTEN
BEEN TOLD OR THOUGHT THIS STORY IS ABOUT
SO WE CAN HEAR IT AGAIN, MAYBE FOR THE
FIRST TIME.***

**I DON'T THINK THIS STORY IS SIMPLY ABOUT
JESUS GETTING ANGRY. JESUS GOT ANGRY..... I
GET ANGRY.....YOU GET ANGRY..... IT'S OK TO
GET ANGRY..... THAT MISSES THE POINT.**

THERE'S MORE TO THIS STORY THAN THAT.....

**AND I DON'T THINK IT'S ABOUT THE ANIMALS OR
THE MONEYCHANGERS BEING IN THE TEMPLE.**

**JESUS SURELY HAD TO HAVE KNOWN THEY
WERE THERE. HE GREW UP AS A FAITHFUL JEW
GOING TO THE TEMPLE. HE DIDN'T SHOW UP
THIS DAY AND SAY, "WOW! THERE ARE ANIMALS
AND MONEYCHANGERS HERE. I DIDN'T KNOW
THIS. THIS IS WRONG."**

**NO.....THE ANIMALS AND MONEYCHANGERS
HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE. THAT'S HOW THE
SYSTEM WORKED. IT WAS BUSINESS AS USUAL
FOR THEM TO BE THERE.**

I THINK JESUS WENT TO THE TEMPLE THAT DAY

FOR ONE PURPOSE; TO THROW OUT AND

OVERTURN BUSINESS AS USUAL. THERE ARE

**TIMES WHEN WE NEED THE TABLES OF OUR LIFE
OVERTURNED AND THE ANIMALS THROWN OUT.**

**IT'S JUST SO EASY TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF
BUSINESS AS USUAL.**

**HAVE YOU EVER PUSHED THE AUTO-PILOT
BUTTON AND LIFE BECAME MECHANICAL? YOU
GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS..... YOU SHOW UP
BUT YOU'RE NOT REALLY THERE..... THAT'S
BUSINESS AS USUAL.....**

**HOW ABOUT THIS? HAVE YOU EVER SMILED
THAT I'M-GOOD-AND-EVERYTHING-IS-FINE SMILE
BUT BEHIND THE SMILE THERE WAS AN
EMPTINESS, YOU FELT HOLLOW, AND YOUR
HEART WAS BREAKING? THAT'S CARRYING ON
WITH BUSINESS AS USUAL. OR MAYBE YOU
WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND YOU ARE AS
EXHAUSTED AS YOU WERE WHEN YOU WENT TO
BED THE NIGHT BEFORE. BUSINESS AS USUAL.**

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU WERE JUST NOT YOURSELF? NOTHING SEEMED RIGHT? BOREDOM OVERCAME CREATIVITY. THERE WAS NO ENTHUSIASM, WONDER, OR IMAGINATION. IT WAS JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL. SOMETIMES WE LOOK AT LIFE AND THE WORLD AND IT ALL SEEMS IN VAIN. CERTAINLY THIS YEAR OF PANDEMIC HAS LED MANY OF US TO PLACES AND THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS SUCH AS THIS.....WE'RE BUSY BUT NOT REALLY GETTING ANYWHERE. THERE'S NO DEPTH OR MEANING, ONLY BUSINESS AS USUAL. BUSINESS AS USUAL CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE: IN FRIENDSHIPS, MARRIAGES, PARENTING, WORK, AND YES....EVEN THE CHURCH.

THE THINGS I JUST DESCRIBED ARE NOT, HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM. THEY ARE THE SYMPTOM IN THE SAME WAY THAT THE ANIMALS AND MONEYCHANGERS IN THE TEMPLE ARE NOT THE PROBLEM. THEY ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SOMETHING DEEPER GOING ON. THE PROBLEM IS NOT SO MUCH IN THE TEMPLE AS IT IS IN THE HUMAN HEART.

THAT DEEPER ISSUE IS, I THINK, WHAT GIVES RISE TO BUSINESS AS USUAL. SOMETIMES IT'S ABOUT OUR FEAR..... WE'RE FEARFUL ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR LIFE OR THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE

**AND WE WANT SOME TYPE OF SECURITY AND
PREDICTABILITY SO WE CAN KEEP ON DOING
THE SAME OLD THINGS.**

**BUSINESS AS USUAL IS PREDICTABLE AND
STEADY BUT IT CREATES ONLY THE ILLUSION OF
SECURITY. SOMETIMES BUSINESS AS USUAL IS A
SYMPTOM OF OUR GRIEF AND SORROW.**

SOMETHING OR SOMEONE HAS BEEN LOST.....

**WE CAN'T GET BACK THE LIFE WE WANT SO WE
CLING TO BUSINESS AS USUAL BECAUSE IT'S
FAMILIAR AND WE WANT SOME STABILITY.**

**OTHER TIMES WE ARE SO BUSY AND WORN OUT
MAKING A LIVING THAT LIFE TURNS INTO ONE
TASK AFTER ANOTHER, ONE APPOINTMENT
AFTER ANOTHER, A NEVER ENDING TO DO LIST,
AND IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL. MAYBE WE'VE
TAKEN PEOPLE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND THINGS
FOR GRANTED. MAYBE WE'VE LOST OUR SENSE
OF GRATITUDE, WONDER, OR MYSTERY.**

**I DO NOT SAY ANY OF THAT AS A CRITICISM OR
JUDGMENT OF YOU, ME, OR ANYONE ELSE. I'M
JUST NAMING WHAT OFTEN HAPPENS TO US.**

**WHAT HAS BUSINESS AS USUAL LOOKED LIKE IN
YOUR LIFE? IN WHAT WAYS IS IT BUSINESS AS
USUAL FOR YOU TODAY?**

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF REASONS AND
WAYS IN WHICH WE FALL INTO BUSINESS AS
USUAL. THERE'S ONE THING, HOWEVER, THAT I
KEEP COMING BACK TO..... *FORGETFULNESS.*
BUSINESS AS USUAL IS BORN OF
FORGETFULNESS..... WE FORGET THAT WE
REALLY ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.
WE FORGET THAT ALL OF CREATION IS THE
RESIDENCE OF GOD. *WE FORGET THAT IN*
WHATEVER DIRECTION WE MIGHT TURN, THERE
IS THE FACE OF GOD GAZING UPON US. *AND AS*
SOON AS WE FORGET THOSE THINGS ABOUT
OURSELVES, EACH OTHER, OR THE WORLD, LIFE
BECOMES BUSINESS AS USUAL.

**I THINK THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED IN THE
TEMPLE. THEY DIDN'T SEE THEMSELVES OR ONE
ANOTHER AS THE TRUE TEMPLE OF GOD. IT WAS
ALL ABOUT THE HUMAN BUILT TEMPLE, THE
ANIMALS, AND THE COINS. THEY HAD
FORGOTTEN THAT GOD WAS MORE INTERESTED
IN THEM THAN IN THEIR FESTIVALS AND THAT
GOD WANTED THEM MORE THAN THEIR
OFFERINGS.**

**WHEN WE FORGET THAT WE ARE THE TEMPLE
OF GOD LIFE CAN EASILY BECOME A SERIES OF
TRANSACTIONS. RELATIONSHIPS AND INTIMACY
ARE LOST. PRIORITIES GET REARRANGED.
MAKING A LIVING REPLACES LIVING A LIFE.**

***LIFE BECOMES A MARKETPLACE RATHER THAN
A PLACE FOR MEETING THE HOLY IN
OURSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER. AND IT'S
BUSINESS AS USUAL.***

**THAT'S WHAT JESUS IS OVERTURNING AND
DRIVING OUT OF THE TEMPLE..... IN THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO JOHN THIS HAPPENS AT THE
VERY BEGINNING OF JESUS MINISTRY..... THE
WORD BECAME FLESH (JOHN 1:14), WATER
BECAME WINE (JOHN 2:9), AND NOW THE
TEMPLE IS BECOMING HUMAN. AND IT DOES NOT
STOP HERE. THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE
GOSPEL JESUS WILL BE INTERRUPTING
BUSINESS AS USUAL.**

REMEMBER THE SAMARITAN WOMEN AT THE WELL (JOHN 4:4-26)? SHE'S HAD FIVE HUSBANDS AND SHE'S LIVING WITH A MAN WHO IS NOT HER HUSBAND. DESPITE WHAT WE HAVE DONE TO HER, THAT'S NOT A STATEMENT ABOUT HER. IT'S ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF BUSINESS AS USUAL. HER FIRST HUSBAND DIED, DIVORCED HER, OR RAN OFF. WHO KNOWS? WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT IN THIS TIME AND PLACE AND CULTURE IT WAS IMPROPER AND DANGEROUS TO BE WOMEN WITHOUT A MAN. BUSINESS AS USUAL MEANT SHE HAD TO BELONG TO A MAN. SO THERE WAS A SECOND MAN, AND A THIRD, AND A FOURTH, AND A FIFTH, AND A SIXTH.

JESUS MEETS THIS WOMEN AT THE WELL AND INTERRUPTS BUSINESS AS USUAL. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MAN OR MEN IN HER LIFE. IT'S ABOUT HER. JESUS RECOGNIZES HER AS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. IT'S NEITHER ON THIS SAMARITAN MOUNTAIN NOR IN JERUSALEM. SHE IS NOW THE WELL OF LIVING WATER.

HOW ABOUT THE MAN THAT SPENT THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS ON A MAT (JOHN 5:1-9)? HE WAS PARALYZED AND ALWAYS TRYING TO GET INTO THAT POOL OF WATER THAT WOULD HEAL HIM BUT SOMEONE ALWAYS GOT THERE FIRST. THE SAME GROUND, THE SAME MAT, THE SAME PARALYZED LEGS, THE SAME FAILED EFFORT.

IT WAS THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS OF BUSINESS AS USUAL. THEN JESUS COMES AND SAYS, “STAND UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND WALK.” AND THE MAN DID. HE ROSE UP TO A NEW LIFE AND BUSINESS AS USUAL HAD AGAIN BEEN INTERRUPTED.

**AND THEN THERE’S LAZARUS (JOHN 11:1-44).
HE’S BEEN DEAD THREE DAYS ALREADY.**

MARTHA KNOWS THE STENCH OF DEATH IS PRESENT. JESUS TELLS HER IT WILL NO LONGER BE BUSINESS AS USUAL. “TAKE AWAY THE STONE,” HE SAYS. DEATH WILL NOT HAVE THE FINAL WORD. “LAZARUS, COME OUT.”

AND LET'S NOT FORGET THE FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE THAT SHOW UP EMPTY AND HUNGRY (JOHN 6:1-13). PHILIP IS SURE THERE'S NOT ENOUGH. THERE'S NO WAY TO FEED THEM. EMPTY AND HUNGRY PEOPLE ARE BUSINESS AS USUAL. BUT JESUS HAS OTHER PLANS. TWO FISH AND FIVE LOAVES ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH. EVERYONE WAS SATISFIED AND TWELVE BASKETS WERE FILLED WITH LEFTOVERS. IT WAS NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE EMPTY AND HUNGRY.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN JESUS IS INTERRUPTING, DISRUPTING, OVERTURNING, AND THROWING OUT BUSINESS AS USUAL.

BUSINESS AS USUAL IS DESTRUCTIVE OF OUR LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS. IT DESTROYS OUR ABILITY SEE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE HOLY THAT IS ALREADY PRESENT IN AND AMONG US.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH SO THAT THE TEMPLE MIGHT BECOME HUMAN. JESUS CONTINUES TO OVERTURN AND THROW OUT BUSINESS AS USUAL BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS THERE ARE STILL SAMARITAN WOMEN WAITING AT THE WELL IN OUR WORLD TODAY. THERE ARE STILL LAME ---PARALYZED AND POLARIZED PEOPLE GROUNDED BY BUSINESS AS USUAL.

EMPTY AND HUNGRY PEOPLE ARE STILL A
REALITY IN OUR WORLD AND THERE ARE DEAD
PEOPLE WAITING TO BE MADE ALIVE.

MAYBE FOR YOU TODAY THIS ISN'T ABOUT

OTHER PEOPLE..... MAYBE YOU ARE THE WOMEN

AT THE WELL. MAYBE YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S

LIKE TO BE GROUNDED AND PARALYZED.

MAYBE YOU ARE EMPTY AND HUNGRY TODAY.

MAYBE YOU NEED TO BE CALLED TO LIFE.

MAYBE BUSINESS AS USUAL NEEDS TO BE

INTERRUPTED IN YOUR LIFE.

**REGARDLESS OF WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE'VE
DONE OR LEFT UNDONE, OR HOW WE SEE OR
JUDGE OUR LIFE, WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD
AND THERE IS ONE WHO STANDS IN THE TEMPLE
OF OUR LIFE INTERRUPTING BUSINESS AS
USUAL.....**

**SO TELL ME THIS. WHAT DOES THE TEMPLE OF
YOUR LIFE NEED TODAY? WHAT TABLES IN
YOUR LIFE NEED TO BE OVERTURNED? WHAT
ANIMALS NEED TO BE DRIVEN OUT?**

**I AM NOT ASKING ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO
HAPPEN SO THAT YOU CAN BECOME HOLY OR
BECOME THE TEMPLE,**

**BUT SO YOU CAN SEE THAT YOU ALREADY ARE
THE TEMPLE AND CLAIM WHAT IS ALREADY
YOURS. JESUS DOES NOT MAKE US INTO
SOMETHING WE WERE NOT. HE CALLS US BACK
TO WHO WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....AMEN.....**