**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**April 24th, 2022**

**Brazen Acts of Beauty**

**First Sunday After Easter**

1. Extravagant Love

This morning, I’m keeping my sermon short and sweet – consider it a sermonette. It’s the week after Easter and our services have been running longer, so I don’t think anyone will mind.

In our second reading this morning, we get a sense of Mary’s

extravagant love for Jesus. She takes her most prized perfume, one with rich tones and scents and anoints Jesus’ feet. She does this because she loves him, she knows his power, she is grateful for him, and wants to acknowledge him in a tangible way.

Though we all know Judas’ reasons for stopping her, because

he’s a thief, I feel guilty in admitting that I understand his perspective from another angle. I felt this theological tension just this past week.

Bryan and I visited the Mormon temple in D.C. as it is

open to the public before they rededicate it. Despite my hangups with the Mormon religion and its teachings, I wanted to see inside as an academic curiosity. Bryan and I put on our nerd hats and went, ready to ask questions, ready to pay attention and take notice.

As we stood before the temple, it said, “The House of the

Lord” and we were told that it truly was to be felt as a holy place. As you enter, the art is exquisite, the floors are patterned, and everything has a detail or purpose. The building is seven stories tall with beautiful spires and manicured landscaping.

When we walked out of the temple, Bryan and I debriefed. I

shared with him that I felt this tension, well, in truth, many tensions, but the one for this Sunday is this – the fact that the building must have cost an enormous amount of money to restore and couldn’t that money have been spent on helping the community?

1. Beauty and Cost

Is beauty worth the monetary cost? I guess it depends who you ask. Beauty is a way of finding God or a means to understanding truth. For me, I find beauty in different ways – in both the large powerful cathedrals and chapels, as well as the quiet garden. Each place has something to speak to me, to remind me of the beauty God has given us and to pay attention.

Yet there is discernment, isn’t there? When we pay an enormous amount of money, we do not do that without thought, but we question who we are, who we want to be, where we want our money to go. That’s why we speak about the on-the-ground missions our offerings touch – from global, to national, to local. We want to use what God has generously given us in a wise and appropriate way. Beauty can certainly be worth cost, we see it in the Scriptures, but we are also encouraged to be discerning disciples who are willing to take a leap of faith either way and make the right call for our communities.

1. Beauty

There’s a dynamic theological push and pull here and each

situation will be different. Here in our text, Jesus admonishes Judas, because Jesus will be here a short time, and it’s better for the perfume to come off the shelf then sit there forever. Mary’s actions are seen by Judas as wasteful, shameful, or inappropriate, but Jesus affirms and praises her. In this circumstance, it’s clear – the perfume is worth this beautiful moment Mary and Jesus share.

This morning, I want you to consider where you find beauty. How do you define it? The old saying is true – beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Our answers around this sanctuary will all be different.

I’m going to take the privilege, something I usually do not do and take a pause here and I want to interact. Can some of you tell me where you find beauty?

Beauty can be in a place, in a building, in a structure. Beauty can be found in people or in actions. Beauty can be heard or felt in music. Beauty can be smelt in the flowers or comforting lift of a whiff of a cup of tea. Beauty is everywhere if we only but pay attention.

1. This week

I want to remind you of the words of Mary Oliver from last week that stay with me this week. She says, “Instructions for Living a Life: Pay Attention. Be Astonished. Tell about it.”

That’s what I’m going to ask you to do this week. Pay attention to what you find beautiful and give thanks to God for it. Be astonished, be amazed when you slow down and notice something that you’ve often passed and suddenly consider incredible. Take on the eyes of a child – the eyes that see these things for the first time and find awe. And then, share the beauty, share this beauty with someone you know, let them hear the beauty, and encourage them to find beauty too.

My friends, God has given us a beautiful world – let us go out from this place and find the beauty and give thanks. Amen.