

## **R U Kidding - Mind Your Manners: Matthew 21:12-13**

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World Communion Sunday. It's rather fitting that our Mind Your Manners theme is today. So often for children it's when we're about to sit down and join in a meal with someone that we're told, Mind Your Manners. There's so much to watch for at a table too, don't put your elbows on the table, don't have your knees up at the table, use your napkin, pass the food, say please, say thank you, if you don't like the way it looks...don't tell anyone, don't talk with your mouth full, use your fork, wipe your mouth, chew with your mouth closed, don't blow bubbles in your chocolate milk, don't play with your food, eat your vegetables, don't give your food to the dog, no toys at the table, no electronics either, and certainly don't belch at the table, It's a wonder we actually get any food into our bodies as children. So many rules. And how do we wrap it up nicely for our children? By simply stating, mind your manners. All these things you've been taught, remember them, it's how you're expected to act.

We had two scriptures this morning. One short message from Jesus, continuing our *R U Kidding?* theme. And one overarching scripture, Romans 12, that summarizes well all the many things we've covered during this series as we've learned to Become Like a Child, Play Fair, Be Kind, say Thank You and Please, Share and Share Alike, Say Nice Things, and now, Mind Your Manners.

Our story from Jesus this morning takes place at the temple. The temple is a place where everyone was welcome, male or female, slave or free, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, from the area or from another country, it's a place where all are welcome. And it was believed that when all people weren't welcome, God no longer was there.

"Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his *Letters and Papers from Prison* about churches not being welcoming during the rule of the Nazis. The Nazis transported to concentration camps, executed, and cremated millions of Jews, gay people, gypsies, communists, and political dissenters. This is what he wrote: 'Our church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, it is not capable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world. Our words then are bound to lose their force and cease, and our being Christians today will be limited to two things: Prayer and righteous action.'" During this time of injustice from the Nazis, Christians weren't speaking out. Churches saw the injustices and they did nothing. By doing nothing, the churches were no longer places for all people. The church was no longer a place of prayer or sanctuary.

Some people look at what Jesus did and they say, why would he have done that? The people selling doves are in an excellent location. (It was custom to sacrifice doves at certain events in one's life, including birth, according to Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke.) So setting up by the temple was a good location. And the money changers, they were needed for those traveling and not having the right currency to exchange their

money so they could give at the temple. So why would Jesus be so against these small businesses right outside the temple?

I don't think it's necessarily about the businesses, but more about the temple. The temple wasn't truly a place where all were welcome. Not everyone could afford to change their money just to give to the church. Those were not welcome. Not everyone could afford doves for those special events. Those were not welcome. In order for our churches to be places where all are welcome, we must make room for all and not make rules that exclude.

Years ago we had a visitor during one of our Maundy Thursday services tell us that we say in our church all are welcome and we say all are welcome at Christ's table, but we didn't have communion elements that she could eat, so therefore she wasn't really welcome at this table. If she hadn't have spoken up about that injustice, we wouldn't even have thought about it. But because she did, we also found out that there were others with the same circumstances. We now offer gluten free bread and wafer options as well as water cups for those who want to accept that invitation to Christ's table, so all are truly welcome to partake.

Our recent injustice at the table is different than that Bonhoeffer witnessed. Yet our churches as a whole have a lot of confessing, lamenting, and reconciling to do. On this World Communion Sunday we have a time to do each of those. At 1pm we have a chance to come together with others to confess how we contribute to injustices and lament the injustices going on around us. As we come to the table today, we have a chance to give to a reconciliation fund through our denomination. One that funds ways in which reconciliation and healing can occur. Outside of these walls, we have the opportunity each day to speak up when we bear witness to injustices, so that all will know they are truly welcome as a part of God's family.

We will mind our manners, meaning we will make sure all are welcome in this space and at this table. On this World Communion Sunday, we join with brothers and sisters around the world at many physical tables, with many loaves of bread, with many cups of wine, proclaiming Christ as our host. And that's where we find ourselves today...