

When I was reading through the scripture passages this week, one of the phrases that caught my attention was, “your hands are bloody.” It made me think of the indigenous women who wear a red handprint across their mouth to protest that thousands of girls and women have gone missing, have been murdered, have been silenced, while seemingly forgotten by the world at large. The red handprint is a visual way of presenting the message, “You are not forgotten. I remember. And I want other people to remember, too.” Why is that the message? The National Crime Information Center reported that in 2016 there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls; however the U.S. Department of Justice’s federal missing persons database, NamUs, only logged 116 cases. Why are the numbers so different? The lack of communication, combined with jurisdictional issues between state, local, federal, and tribal law enforcement, make it nearly impossible to begin the investigative process. And yet the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that murder is the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women and that the rates of violence on reservations can be up to ten times higher than the national average. However, it wasn’t until 2017 when the Urban Indian Health Institute started a study that ANY research had been done on rates of such violence among American Indian and Alaska Native women living in urban areas – despite the fact that 71% of these women live in urban areas. The study found that these women and girls disappear not once, but three times – in life, in the media, and in the data.

That’s why there have been many creative efforts to draw attention to these women and girls whose “disappearances” have been grossly under-reported. For example Lehi Sanchez, who goes by the name Lehi Thunder Voice Eagle, is an advocate through his art and design work. He often takes well known, classical images and reimagines them to shift what the viewer can see in them. In his mixed media work titled, “Creators Promise,” he has ‘shifted’ Leonardo Da Vinci’s, “Mona Lisa,” to represent a Native woman with braided hair, and eagle feathers. Across the fingers of her left hand the word HOPE can be seen; and on her right hand the letters MMIW – for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women. The red hand painted across her mouth is not the “Mona Lisa” smile you might have expected to see there.

After seeing this image I began to wonder if God would wear a red hand painted across God’s mouth in protest and remembrance of the blood on the hands of God’s people? Would God continue to wear this red hand print until everyone ends their evildoings; puts a stop to tearing people to pieces; and said “NO” to wrong? . . . The prophet Isaiah says that if God’s people would willingly learn to do good; work for justice; help the down-and-out; stand up for the homeless; go to bat for the defenseless; and clean our blood red hands – then God will listen to us, sit down with us, and feast with us. . . . But if we don’t

*willingly* work on God’s ‘to do’ list; if we remain willful and stubborn; if we continue to have blood on our hands; then we will die like dogs. . . . That is uncomfortably clear and understandable, isn’t it?!

Jesus also provides a clear ‘to do’ list in our reading from the Gospel of Luke, but first he says, “Don’t be afraid of missing out.” Which is kind of funny because today, “FOMO” or “Fear of Missing Out,” is a hot topic. Many people experience this fear that they will miss out on the next big, new thing if they aren’t hyper about following social media feeds, and staying on top of whatever is beginning to trend, and dropping what is not. But Jesus said, “DON’T let that fear consume you!” And according to Jesus, the good news is that we don’t need to be afraid of missing out because God wants to give us the very kingdom itself. God’s kingdom! That’s like the ultimate all-inclusive gift – that leaves nothing for us to miss out on! But in order for us to truly understand and appreciate how all-inclusive this gift is – well, *that* might take some doing. So Jesus provides a little ‘to do’ list: Be generous. Give to the poor. Do your banking in heaven. Be ready and aware. Anticipate being blessed. Don’t be slovenly or careless. . . . Well, what do you know?! Jesus is as clear and understandable as God!

And I would venture to say that there are definite overlaps between God’s ‘to do’ list and Jesus’ ‘to do’ list.

#### **God’s ‘To Do’ List**

- Say no to wrong
- Learn to do good
- Work for justice
- Help the down-and-out, homeless, and defenseless
- Clean your hands

#### **Jesus’ ‘To Do’ List**

- Be generous
- Give to the poor
- Bank in heaven
- Be ready and aware
- Anticipate being blessed
- Don’t be slovenly or careless

Because both lists are really about *how* to live, aren’t they? If we prioritize and treasure working for justice, concern for the poor and vulnerable, doing good, being generous – if that is how we are living our lives – then we’re already shaping our lives to receive the gift of God’s kingdom. When we focus on doing the things in these ‘to do’ lists it means we’re already trying to see the world through God’s eyes, and we’re already alert to identifying ways to generously share God’s steadfast love through our own loving kindness and compassion, then we’re already living like we’re in God’s kingdom! This is not rocket science! It’s just doing what we need to do as the children of God. Amen.