

In Broad Daylight

Sermon preached at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Friday was a brutally cold, brilliantly sunny day. Friday was also the day of the called for national economic blackout, a non-violent protest of ICE's aggressive enforcement tactics. Interesting timing, given our texts this week - which turn the economics of our perspective upside down. Both Micah and Jesus proclaim the "blessing first" nature of our relationship with God. Both Micah and Jesus proclaim God's values, which are not the values of the world.

As humans we find it counter intuitive - shouldn't God work the way we see everything else working? If we do this, behave in this way, then we will get a reward. But God turns that kind of quid pro quo economy upside down. We are blessed by God first, then we respond.

Our text from Micah's passage establishes the blessing God has already given: "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt..." Therefore, Micah asks, what is required of you - in response? To "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." We live out our gratitude, not in order to be loved by God, but in response to God's love for us.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus paints a similar picture of blessing - turning our economics upside down. God's values are not our values, God's ways are not our ways. What's stunning about the Beatitudes are how non-sensical they seem. Looking around the world, then and now - it's seems obvious that the "blessed" are the rich, happy, strong, powerful, satisfied, ruthless, deceptive, aggressive, safe, and popular. But Jesus is saying that despite appearances, the truly blessed are actually the poor, mourning, gentle, hungry, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking, persecuted, and reviled.¹

His words are consolation and encouragement to the people who gathered to hear him preach. They are oppressed, and hungry, and frightened. Yet, Jesus tells them God sees what they are experiencing, and God is with them in their suffering. Jesus declares that the reign of heaven is dawning. The kingdom of God will overturn the world's hierarchies of status and privilege.

Jesus proclaims that in the coming days of God's kingdom those who are suffering, poor, oppressed, overwhelmed and downtrodden - will be redeemed and restored. And even those who are rich, strong, and satisfied - are invited to repent, to celebrate God's world-turning salvation.² To join in following Jesus. To live into God's ways, to live out Kingdom values.

So back to Friday for a moment - whether or not you supported the economic blackout - it's interesting to see economics as a path of protest. Particularly for many of us who are filled, safe, satisfied, warm, and reasonably well off. To take a moment to put the brakes on our consumerism in the hopes of signaling the need for change. Because we live in a capitalist society - consumerism makes the world go round. And opting out, even for a moment, focuses us on different values. Helps us remember that the ways of the world are not the ways of God.

As people who want to walk in God's ways, we are called to respond when the ways the world oppress the vulnerable. That's what it means to "do justice."

In the bright sunshine of Friday morning, I went to the National Blackout Website to read their explanation of the economic blackout. They noted the response was in reaction to people being gunned down "in broad daylight," for exercising their first amendment rights to protest mass deportations.³

I was struck by the phrase "in broad daylight." The book I just finished by Becca Stevens has a whole chapter titled, *In broad daylight*.

Stevens begins the chapter with this story:

"Can you believe it?" my mom would ask with indignation to whoever was in earshot. "Right there, in broad daylight." Somehow, in her mind, the fact that she was cut off in traffic or shortchanged was worse because the infraction happened right there in broad daylight.

The phrase emphasized that the perpetrators were worse because they had no shame and did whatever they were doing, right there, in the light, instead of skulking around in the darkness of shadows and moonlight.⁴

Friends, I'm with Becca Stevens' mom on this one. "Can you believe it? Right there in broad daylight!" For me, that's part of what's so horrifying about the violence we're witnessing - that it can occur in broad daylight, while the world is watching. Blatantly, proudly effecting violence against human beings in the streets of our cities, in our neighborhoods.

Violence has more impact when it happens in broad daylight, where people can see it. When the world is watching. It's more callous, and more terrifying.

But following that same logic, broad daylight works both ways. If violence and injustice can happen in broad daylight - then so can justice and kindness. If violence has more impact in broad daylight, then so does mercy.

Perhaps "right there in broad daylight" is an opportunity for us to live out God's values - to show mercy and respond to the blessings of our lives by blessing others. By standing up in broad daylight to oppose the persecutors, to walk alongside those who are vulnerable, hurting, and afraid - so they can be protected.

On Tuesday this past week, Bishop Fisher hosted a call with clergy of the diocese to begin the conversation of how to prepare ourselves, our parishes, and our communities to respond when ICE descends in force. As he noted, it's not a question of "if" but of "when." Not only is Massachusetts a "Blue" state, but we have the third largest concentration of Haitian immigrants in the nation.

We will be targeted by ICE, and we need to prepare so we can protect the vulnerable among us. We went through a list of actions we can take now, to position ourselves to respond. I'll be sharing that information with you soon in several formats - the video recording of that meeting, other tools provided, and my notes from that meeting, and from the local Immigration Forum that was held on Saturday afternoon.

However we choose to be involved, I think we leverage broad daylight - we live out our kingdom values in the light. We act as people who truly understand the blessings of God, and respond to those blessings by blessing those around us. Those in need, those who are afraid, those who are suffering.

In the bright brutal cold of a New England winter, it's tempting to hunker down and isolate. But not this winter - the world needs to see acts of justice and mercy happening, right there in broad daylight. People who are feeling threatened need to see that they are not alone.

It might not make the national news, but it will matter. How we respond to the needs of our community matters, particularly now. Together, may we do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with our God - in broad daylight. Amen.

¹ Blessing First: SALT's Commentary for Epiphany 4, saltproject.org Jan 26, 2026

² Blessing First: SALT's Commentary for Epiphany 4, saltproject.org Jan 26, 2026

³ <https://nationalshutdown.org/>, retrieved Jan 30, 2026

⁴ Becca Stevens, *Practically Divine*, Harper Horizon, September 14, 2021, p1