**Text**: John 12:20-33

 **The Bethel Pulpit**

 **Pastor Martha Butzier**

 March 18, 2018 – 5th Sunday of Lent On the web at [www.bethel-madison.org](http://www.bethel-madison.org/)
 312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison WI 53703

With his MBA in hand, he moved to Chicago and joined the race to the top. He started out at American National Bank and five years later, after proving what a valuable asset he was, he was hired to run half of Citicorp’s leverage and finance group in Chicago. In three years, he and two other vice presidents raised $82 million dollars. They bought 11 companies and acquired 25 more to raise investor funds to $374 million - all of this by the time he was 30 years old. The prize was in his hands. By most, he was far ahead of where he started out.

It happened. Fear set into his heart. I imagine it kept him awake at night. At first, he noticed how his colleagues changed as they accumulated multiple houses, expensive jewelry, and private airplanes. And that’s when he became afraid he was going to lose his own material possessions that his hard earned money had bought him. But then, something much more significant happened. I would call it his moment of repentance, the moment God seeped into the coldness of his heart and turned him around. Andy got a good look at himself, and he didn’t much like what he saw. He saw his arms wrapped around his wealth. He saw how full of himself he was. He resembled a modern-day Scrooge full of fear and feeling lost and alone.

The way he was living his life wasn’t true to what he valued; it wasn’t true to the discoveries he made about life long before he was a successful business man. His life needed an overhaul. He wanted to change for himself and for the sake of his family. His own company, the company he founded, was embarking on a new venture, and he said, “Count me out.” At that moment he died to his life of chasing after wealth. At that moment, God turned him around, and he realized that living a fruitful life isn’t about himself; it was about relationships with other people – people who were a lot like him and people who were completely different than he was. Being fruitful is putting your arms around your neighbors.

He was no longer interested in raising profits without a bigger purpose as the goal. He formed an accountability group. He took half of his wealth and by combining it with three other friends they set out to invest in third world nations and in Chicago’s impoverished neighborhoods.

He discovered that faith has everything to do with how he lives every moment of his life. Believing in Jesus led him to letting go of his reasons for making money. His family lived in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the Chicago area. Because he wanted his family to be aware of the how others lived, they moved to a place with greater diversity. He realized his choice to wrap his arms around wealth were limiting his view of God’s people in all of their uniqueness and all of their daily struggles just to meet daily needs.

In 2012, he co-founded Promus. The name is Latin meaning “stewardship”. He has raised capital to build schools and hospitals to help in some of the neediest parts of the world. They go into places like Honduras, Swaziland, Uganda, and Rwanda where violence is wide spread. The organization gives money to the colleges of nursing and medicine at the University of Iowa, so they can Niger and Haiti to help on mission trips. They lay their lives on the line producing fruit to enhance the lives of others. His whole family is involved in this mission of reaching out. Now his sight is set on being light for the world. He now lives with a different view of what it means to be successful. While at the same time, he knows he isn’t perfect. He has a clearer image of what discipleship looks like when we walk with Jesus.

Jesus is on a specific journey to the cross where he redefines success and winning. He too will die a ghastly sort of death and be placed in the ground. His death, resurrection and ascension are fruitful beyond measure because he gives everlasting life to the world. God gives us grace upon grace. And we get side track and wrap our arms around wealth or fame or how much we have learned.

The Greeks came asking to see Jesus. I have to think the disciples were surprised by what Jesus said. They were looking for a simple yes or no response, but they got a better answer. We see Jesus on the cross, giving his life up to save the world. We hear how Jesus wants us to participate in his life saving work. We see Jesus in using our time, talents, and money to invest in the lives of others. This is where Andy saw Jesus in the faces of the people he has met in serving others.

Since the school shootings in Parkland, Florida, students across the country have been vocal. I have been so impressed by how articulate they are, how well put together their words are. They are concerned not only about their own safety but the safety of other students. They have taken me by surprise in the same way that Jesus takes me by surprise.

Jesus takes us by surprise and challenges us to look for him. I would be one of the first to say sometimes I don’t want to see him. I don’t want to be turned around to see the world as he does. Today’s text from John calls us to see Jesus in his suffering because that is also his glory. It is his love for us all. When we see suffering in the world, really see it, we see Jesus.