

"Just" Jesus!
Cami Caudill

During the summer between 5th and 6th grade, my sister and a few friends of ours were absolutely sure that we were going to make it BIG! We were hard at work in our home-recording studio, which happened to be in my mom's room, laying on her bed, with state of the art recording instruments... or instrument... a Panasonic- shoebox style voice recorder and a new pack of blank cassette tapes. Our plan was brilliant- we were going to do covers of the best music that has hit ears since.. The Beatles... Boys II Men's top hits.

With her gifted range, my sister would sing all of Nathan's and Michael's parts, Crystal or Rachel would take Shawn's part, and with my unassuming charm, heart and flair for the drama, I would take on Wanya's parts. I studied Wanya's voice in the hits, watched on loop, music videos that we illegally recorded off of MTV to study his moves, his persona and flair.

To bid the Summer a due, my mom took us all to see Boyz II Men in concert! I could not believe that I was going to have the opportunity to see Wanya...IN PERSON!! I had spent so much time studying him- would he be the same person?... were WE actually basically the same person, as I thought?? I could not wait!!

You know that old commercial for Disneyland where the brother and sister are going to Disneyland the next day, and when the mom comes in to check on them, they aren't sleeping, and they say..."We're too excited to sleeeeeeep!!" ... yeah, that was me. The day of, we made the drive, belting our respective parts the entire 2-hour drive to the concert.

(have I noted that my Mom is a SAINT?!?)

We got to the venue, and you could smell the excitement in the air (never mind that it was Phoenix, AZ in late August!))!! We found our seats in the ginormous arena, made sure that our mini-flashlights worked for the songs that you needed to wave them in the air for, and were ready!

While some unknown artist named Brandi took the stage to open, we decided that we better take the opportunity go to the restroom, after all, it was JUST Brandi, and we did not want to take the risk of missing greatness. As I left the restroom, there was a bit of commotion. I stretched and stretched my 4'11 self to see what was going on. And there. He. Was!!... Nathan!! He was standing near the restrooms, signing autographs!!

I found my ticket, and a pencil (cause who doesn't carry a pencil at a concert!?!), got to the front, and was the best cool-self that I could be in the moment!.. he said.... "Hi". Then he took the ticket and the pencil from my hand, and signed it. I could not believe my luck!!! As I walked away, Nathan said, "hey, do you want my brother's autograph?!?". I looked over in the direction that Nathan had nodded his head towards a man in jeans and a white tee, with his arms folded.

“It’s JUST his body guard.” I thought. As to not be rude at this generous invitation, I politely said to the gentleman, “... Nah, thanks though!”. My sister and Crystal came running up to me soon after and could NOT believe that I had just gotten Nathan *and* WANYA’s autograph!!.. Wait..What?!? I had just told the persona that I had been working so hard on studying and imitating “nah, Thanks anyway!” because I thought that he was *just* the body guard.

To this day, I have not lived it down. Not because I don’t have his autograph...I don’t even know where that ticket ended up. To this day, I the words, “nah, thanks though” echo in my mind... and at many family dinners!

When in our lives have we assigned someone to being a... *“just”*? *“Just”* the custodian. *“Just”* a nurse, *“just”* a teacher. *“Just”* a Baptist Minister from Alabama, *“Just”* a son of immigrants who worked in manual labor. *“Just”* a daughter of a teacher and handyman from West Virginia who liked numbers. *“Just”* a high school teacher who found himself suffocating in a proverbial closet into his 20’s..

...*“Just a carpenter’s son”*.

In the Gospel this morning, we hear about Jesus’ homecoming... a reunion of sorts where he comes home to show who he has become. He walks in, puts a name tag on, and is eager to show his former classmates, his teachers and elders, “look! Here I am. Here God is!”. Similar to a scene out of Roomie and Michelle’s High School Reunion, Jesus is not only laughed at, but Mark notes that people are actually offended. “No, really, look! I’ll lay my hands on this person and CURE them of their illness so that you might know the Father”... and even so, “Nah, thanks anyway” and he remained *“just”* the carpenter’s son. Due to their inability to see beyond the *“just”*, Mark notes that Jesus was not able to do God’s work, or to bring the love, compassion and grace that can only come from God.

Again, when have we assigned a *“Just”* to someone?

After Hurricane Katrina, our Priest told a story during his sermon of a man who died. At the gates of heaven, he asked, “God, I have devoted my whole life to you. I have cared for and loved all of your creatures. I have gone to church every Sunday. How could you let me die?? I cried out to you day after day, and you never answered. God answered, my son, what are you talking about?? The first time you asked for help, I sent a message through the news crew for you to leave, and you dismissed them because they were *“just”* the news media. The second time you called me, I sent a boat, and you sent them away because they were *“just”* your worry-wart neighbors. The third time you called for me, I sent a helicopter- and again, you sent them away because they were *“just”* trying to order you around.”

None of us are ever a *“just”*- because no matter the day, the time, the season of our life, God is there- even when we are not listening or trying to hide- God is there- not only gifting us with his love, compassion and grace, but helping and hoping that we will share that with each other. We

are a gift unto each other if we are only brave enough to see that in ourselves and humble enough to see it in each other.

You see, it was never “just” Ahmad Arberry- “just” George Floyed... “just” Freddie Gray, “just” Brionna Taylor. It wasn’t “just” Emmett Till, “just” Harvey Milk or “just” Matthew Sheppard. It wasn’t “just” 215 unnamed native children in an unmarked, mass grave in Saskatchewan.

That Baptist preacher from Alabama, the Reverend Dr. Martian Luther King, Jr. taught us that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. That son of immigrants working in manual labor became one of the first to unite farm workers on the West coast. Cesar Chavez was essential in passing legislation which established the right to collective bargaining for farm workers in California- the first in US history.

The daughter of a teacher and a handyman from West Virginia’s work included calculating trajectories, launch windows, and emergency return paths for Project Mercury spaceflights, including those for astronauts Alan Shepard, the first American in space, and John Glenn, the first American in orbit, and rendezvous paths for the Apollo Lunar Module and command module on flights to the Moon. Katherine Johnson’s calculations were also essential to the beginning of the Space Shuttle program, and she worked on plans for a mission to Mars.

Like me and perhaps many of you, Jim Obergefell had a dream of the job, the house and the spouse. Though the world told him no, he chose not to hide. On June 26, 2015, Obergefell overturned *Bake*, requiring all states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and to recognize same-sex marriages, establishing same-sex marriage throughout the United States and its territories.

That carpenter’s son became the central figure of Christianity, the world's largest religion. He challenged laws, traditions and culture, and what it meant to be a people of God. He hung out with prostitutes, tax collectors, thieves and the afflicted. He welcomes EVERYONE to his table. EVERYONE- FULL STOP. He was the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father...Through him all things were made. He came down from heaven, and For our sake, he was crucified. He suffered death and was buried...He ascended into heaven, and He will come again in glory- and his kingdom will have no end. He was never “just” the carpenter’s son.

...And, YOU, my friend, are never and have NEVER been “just” you.

You are part of a Holy family. You are sons and daughters of a God of grace, mercy and healing. You are the siblings to unconditional love. When we ask Jesus, “but Lord, when have I fed you, and clothed you... ensured that you have a safe place to rest your head, fought for your right to healthcare and a free and equal education- advocated for your voice to be heard and for your children to be free from fear of gun violence on the streets and in their classrooms”, he will

answer, “Truly I say to you, as you have done it for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it for Me.”

Brothers and sisters, we are all whole, creative and resourceful- we are God’s beloved and beautiful to behold. There is no “just” about us.

My prayer for us is that the next time we think, “nah, thanks though”, the only just that comes from our mind, lips and heart be... Love.

Amen.

Catch:

Good Moring, St. Columba’s, and a very happy and safe 4th of July to you and your family!

My name is Cami Caudill, and I am the Missioner for Community Engagement.

Have you gone to your high school reunion, or some kind of homecoming? I wonder what Michelle Obama’s high school reunion might have looked like? Or Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s.

What does Dr. Foucci put on his name tag??

... I wonder what Jesus’ reunion might look like. What would he write on his name tag? What did he want his hometown to know about him??

Today we listen to the Gospel of Mark, and what get a glimpse of what that might have looked like. Spoiler alert, the words, “Just Jesus” were totally used!

I’m glad that you are here with us today! Settle in, and allow the Spirit to fill your ears, mind and heart.