

Three... Why Not?



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Sermon by Rev. Dr. Lauren Speeth – July 19, 2015

The following sermon was delivered at the Burlingame United Methodist Church on Sunday July 19th, 2015 by Rev. Dr. Lauren Speeth at the 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. services. It is archived here for your interest.

One of our younger members challenged me to give a sermon entitled *Why Not!* and Pastor Jeff challenged me to give a sermon on women.... And so, I said, “Why Not?” May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, o Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

I have a friend named Julian who is an emergency room doctor. He treats all sorts of people in a big Boston hospital. Julian told me that when young people come in with problems, and seem headed dark places, he also talks to them, giving them advice. He tells them that each of us can wake up in the morning asking, “*How can I live my life best, this day?*” It’s a useful question, as it means different things to us at different times of life. For these youths, it may mean investing in their future or changing direction, otherwise it’s not likely to end so well. I found myself thinking, *Why Not try that question for myself each morning?*” I am, and I like how it flavors the day!

My subject this morning is on *Three Why Not! Women, Mary, Esther and Jane Doe*, Women of faith... active faith... in God’s goodness.





The virgin MARY was a **Why Not!** woman. In the Gospel of Luke [Luke 1:30-55] we are told how the angel Gabriel appeared, telling how, through the power of God, Mary would bear a son. Pondering her choice, what if Mary thought about “*How can I live my life best, this day?*” On the one hand, the world threatened death – being stoned to death – as an unwed pregnant woman. On the other hand, she could choose to trust in God’s goodness and say yes, and bear the son of God in her womb. I like imagining Mary, perhaps meditating on

Micah, or on Psalm 46 that we just heard – “*God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*” But whether she did or not, we know that she chose to trust in God’s faithfulness, to say, **Why Not!** That radical answer allowed for Jesus to walk among us, bringing light and love into the world. The world was changed forever, and henceforth every generation shall call her blessed.

A Why Not! person – like Mary – has the faith to trust in God’s goodness. Why Not! people aren’t blind to the world’s reasons for why not... they just know that God’s reasons for saying Why Not! outweigh everything else.

Queen Esther was a **Why Not!** woman. Esther was a Jewish young girl named Hadassah who hid her identity and became queen of Persia, wife to King Ahasuerus. It’s a juicy story, with much intrigue between her uncle Mordecai and Haman the villain. Her uncle told Esther of an edict – her people would die – but she had no right to go before the king unbidden. She could lose her life. Surely she pondered, “*How can I live my life best, this day?*” On the one hand, she could play it safe, hide her ethnicity, and watch her people perish. On the other hand, had she become queen for just such a moment as this? Eventually she said to herself, **Why Not!** And with great diplomacy and bravery, entertaining her husband with one feast after another, she finally negotiated the safety of her people.

A Why Not! person – like Esther – has faith to step up, saying Why Not! when called to step in, even at personal risk!

Jane Doe was the **Why Not!** woman we just heard about in the reading from the Gospel of Mark. The Bible didn’t give her a name, but she’s the woman with the flow of blood. Her life was probably pretty terrible. Because of her malady, she was considered ritually unclean and therefore subject to shunning. That’s like being untouchable, because anyone who touched you became ritually unclean. By that time, she’d have exhausted all other options for healing, and we’re told she was out of money, as well. Answering the question, “*How can I live my life best, this day?*” meant gathering the courage to leave the



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house. It was a small world, back then – neighbors knew each other – so this must have been really hard for her to do. But she did it, searching after Jesus, knowing just a touch of his garment could heal her after all this time. And her faith was rewarded with a healing.

A Why Not! person – like Jane – holds on to hope, knowing that even if the world forsakes you, God never will.

Mary was a **Why Not!** person. Esther was a **Why Not!** person. Jane was a **Why Not!** person. And you and I – *yes, you and I* – I can be **Why Not!** people, when we choose God's great goodness over the world's ways.

The Bible calls us all – no matter what is happening at the moment – to be **Why Not!** people. People of faith. People who can ponder "*How can I live my life best, this day?*" by keeping in mind the admonition of Micah, and by always remembering to trust in God's goodness in big and in small things.

And so, I say to you, **Why Not?**

