

# Sermon Note: Let the Mystery Be

## Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

As we near the end of our **God Is in the Radio** series, we turn to “Let the Mystery Be” by Iris DeMent. It’s a quiet song with an honest message: faith doesn’t require us to have every answer. Instead, it invites us to acknowledge what we don’t know and allow ourselves to experience the wonder and complexity that still surround us.

Scripture extends a similar invitation. From the ancient prophets to the teachings of Jesus, we encounter voices that challenge simplistic certainty and call us to a more thoughtful faith—one that listens carefully, asks questions without fear, and accepts that some truths remain beyond our reach. Throughout our sacred text, we’re reminded that we are part of something larger than ourselves—something we may never fully explain, and something we can still trust. This week, we explore this kind of faith, where humility and curiosity are not signs of weakness, but signs of wisdom—and where grace and mystery live side by side.

### Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlaoR5m4L80>

This video shows Iris DeMent performing “Let the Mystery Be,” accompanied by a small circle of musicians. There’s no visible audience, giving the performance a quiet, intimate feel—like a song shared among friends.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you as you listened to the song—the lyrics, the mood, the way it was performed?
2. How would you describe the tone of the song? Does it feel uncertain, peaceful, hopeful, something else?
3. The singer repeats the phrase “Let the mystery be.” How do you understand that invitation in the context of faith?
4. Are there areas of your own faith or life where you feel drawn to mystery rather than final answers? Is there tension in this distinction? If so, how do you experience that tension?
5. Some people find comfort in clear, defined beliefs. Others find comfort in acknowledging uncertainty. Where do you tend to find yourself on that spectrum?
6. The musicians sit together in a small circle without a visible audience. How does that setting shape the way you experience the song’s message?
7. The song names different beliefs about life, death, and what comes next, but resists making a final declaration. How do you respond to that kind of humility in spiritual conversations?
8. Can you think of a time when stepping away from certainty allowed you to grow in faith or understanding?
9. Does the song feel like an expression of faith, skepticism, honesty, or something else? Why?
10. If you could carry one line or idea from the song into the week ahead, what would it be?

### **Micah 3:5-12 (NRSVue)**

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets  
who lead my people astray,  
who cry “Peace” when they have something to eat  
but declare war against those  
who put nothing into their mouths.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,  
and darkness to you, without revelation.  
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,  
and the day shall be black over them;

<sup>7</sup>the seers shall be disgraced  
and the diviners put to shame;  
they shall all cover their lips,  
for there is no answer from God.

<sup>8</sup>But as for me, I am filled with power,  
with the spirit of the Lord,  
and with justice and might,  
to declare to Jacob his transgression  
and to Israel his sin.

<sup>9</sup>Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob  
and chiefs of the house of Israel,  
who abhor justice  
and pervert all equity,

<sup>10</sup>who build Zion with blood  
and Jerusalem with wrong!

<sup>11</sup>Its rulers give judgment for a bribe;  
its priests teach for a price;  
its prophets give oracles for money;  
yet they lean upon the Lord and say,  
“Surely the Lord is with us!  
No harm shall come upon us.”

<sup>12</sup>Therefore because of you  
Zion shall be plowed as a field;  
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,  
and the mountain of the temple a wooded height.

### **Matthew 23:1-12 (NRSVue)**

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’s seat;  
<sup>3</sup>therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it, but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. <sup>4</sup>They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others, but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. <sup>5</sup>They do all their deeds to be seen by others, for they

make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. <sup>6</sup>They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues <sup>7</sup>and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi. <sup>8</sup>But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. <sup>9</sup>And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one in heaven. <sup>10</sup>Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. <sup>11</sup>The greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup>All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

### Scripture Study Questions

1. The prophet Micah speaks out against leaders who use their positions for personal gain, offering comfort to some while exploiting others. Where do you see examples of this same dynamic in today's world?
2. Micah warns that society cannot thrive when faith is reduced to a transaction—where spiritual influence is bought, sold, or manipulated. How do you think that warning still applies to religious or political systems today?
3. The prophecy paints a stark picture of what happens when corruption goes unchecked. Yet, even in judgment, there is often the hope of rebuilding. How do you experience that tension between accountability and hope—in the world, or in your own life?
4. Micah reminds us that speaking difficult truths can be an act of faith. What are some situations where you believe truth-telling is necessary, even when it's uncomfortable?
5. The prophet envisions a future where justice replaces exploitation. What would it take for that kind of future to take root—in our community, or in the wider world?
6. In the Matthew passage, Jesus contrasts the religious leaders of his day with the kind of community he hopes to build. What differences do you notice between their approach and his vision?
7. Jesus criticizes those who seek attention and recognition rather than service. Where do you see those same patterns today—in public life, within the church, or even in yourself?
8. Think about someone you admire as a model of faith or leadership. How does their example reflect the qualities Jesus describes—humility, compassion, service?
9. The church is called to be a beloved community—one where each person is valued, and where justice, humility, and service shape how we live together. What are some tangible signs of that kind of community? Where have you experienced it—or longed for it?
10. Jesus teaches—in both word and example—that greatness is found in serving others. How does that challenge or inspire you as you think about your own faith, your role in the church, or your life beyond these walls?

### Weekly Action

This week, practice pausing before rushing to conclusions. When a question arises—in your faith, your relationships, or your daily life—resist the urge to settle it quickly. Instead, sit with the unknown for a moment. Breathe. Pray. Listen. If you're willing, write down one question you don't yet have an answer for—a question about God, about yourself, about the world. Place it somewhere visible. Maybe even consider talking it through with a family member or trusted spiritual partner. Let it remind you that living with questions is part of how we stay open to grace.

## **Prayer**

God, who looked across the vastness of creation and called it good, we thank you for the mountains and valleys, the rainbows and deserts, the depths of the oceans and the endless stretch of sky. We praise you for the beauty of a world beyond our full understanding. You have made us in your image—a reflection of your creativity, yet even that truth remains more than we can grasp. Give us the humility to live with mystery, the courage to trust your love, and the wisdom to serve with compassion. Help us, in our church and in our community, to follow your vision—where justice grows, dignity is restored, and grace reaches everyone, in ways seen and unseen. Amen.