



**TOUCH POINT**

## **Rejected! – Touch Point for September 30, 2020**

**Matthew 21:33-46**

*"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' So, they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"*

*They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."*

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.*

### **Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.**

*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and this was the Lord's doing...Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.'"*

God cannot be stopped. God cannot be defeated. God cannot be silenced.

I think we sometimes picture God as a "Whatever" God. And we take words like forgiveness and grace to mean God is not passionate, or intense, or serious. But this passage tells a different story.

This passage tells us that God cannot be stopped. God cannot be defeated. God cannot be silenced.

Is that good news or bad news? I mean, if God cannot be stopped, defeated, or silenced, then what is my role in all of this. If I won't do the will of God, and God is going to go find someone else who will, then what does that mean for me. Kind of shoots a hole in that "God's Work, Our Hands" thing, doesn't it?

Because, doesn't God depend on me? Doesn't God need me? How else will God know that He is worthy of praise if I don't tell him that? How else will God be glorified if I don't give him MY glory? We have such an imperialistic, arrogant and pompous view of our spiritual selves. We are so sure we are doing God's work, as if no one else is capable, or God is not capable of working anywhere else outside of ourselves.

### **We keep thinking we are doing God's work, rather than God is working on us.**

This is the radicalness of the words of Jesus when he says, *"I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and*

you gave me drink. I was in prison and you visited me.” We think we are doing God’s work when we feed and care for those in need, but God is actually working on us, through the least of these. “*I was hungry.*”

Us religious folk would be a lot better off if we stopped asking, “What does God want me to do to the least of these?” And starting asking, “What does God want to do to me through the least of these?” What is it those who have been rejected and tossed aside in this world, can teach us? What is it they can say to us? What is it they can help us see?

My good friend, Henry Rojas likes to say, “If you want to know what is wrong with the world, ask those who have been crushed by it? Ask the addict, the alcoholic, those with eating disorders? They will tell you what is wrong. They see it more clearly because they have experienced it in their souls.”

I think we can all agree that the world is messed up. So why do we look to those who have most succeeded in a messed-up world to tell us how to fix it? In a dog-eat-dog world, why do we look to the most vicious dogs to transform our world, to change it? The solution to our problems comes not from those who have success in our problem world. For they want to keep the world as it is. No, it comes from those who have been crushed by the world, who have been rejected by the world. Who have been messed up by a messed up world. They are the only ones who can offer an alternative.

*‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and this was the Lord’s doing...’*

This doesn’t just apply to Jesus, but to all who have been rejected by the world. These are the ones God chooses to work through.

I want to share with you something Richard Rohr wrote recently. It’s rather long but he says it so well.

*“We’ve tended to soften Jesus’ conflict with the system, or the established powers, but Jesus’ ministry took place on the margins! In the year 313 A.D., with the Edict of Milan, the Church dramatically changed sides and Christians officially became the Church of the establishment. Before that decree, the Church was by and large of the underclass. It identified with the poor and the oppressed, and the Church itself was still being oppressed and persecuted. The early Church read and understood its history from the catacombs—literally from underground. Such a position will always give us a different perspective than that “found in palaces” (see Matthew 11:8).*

*I’m sure the Emperor Constantine thought he was doing Christians a favor when he ended official persecution and made Christianity the established religion of the empire. Yet it might be the single most unfortunate thing that happened to Christianity. Once we moved from the margins of society to the center, we developed a new film over our eyes. After that, we couldn’t read anything that showed Jesus in confrontation with the establishment, because we were the establishment, and usually egregiously so. Clear teaching on issues of greed, powerlessness, nonviolence, non-control, and simplicity were moved to the sidelines, if not actually countermanded. These issues were still taken seriously by those who fled to the deserts of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Cappadocia. Their practices grew into what we now call “religious life” as observed by monks, nuns, hermits, and anchorites who held onto the radical Gospel in so many ways.*

*As long as the Church bore witness from the margins in some sense, and as long as we operated from a minority position, we had greater access to the truth, to the Gospel, to Jesus. In our time we have to find a way to disestablish ourselves, to identify with our powerlessness instead of our power, our dependence instead of our independence, our communion instead of our individualism. Unless we understand that, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) isn’t going to make any sense.*

*We see in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus intended for us to take the low road. He intended us to operate from the position of “immoral” minority much more than the moral majority. When we’re protecting our self-image as moral, superior, or “saved” persons, we always lose the truth. The daring search for God—the common character of all religion—is replaced with the search for personal certitude and control.*

*As soon as people are comfortably enjoying the fruits of the established system, they don’t normally want any truth beyond their comfort zone. Yet those who are not enjoying those benefits, those who have been marginalized or oppressed in any way, are always longing and thirsting for the coming of the Kingdom, for something more.”*

Perhaps it couldn't be any other way. If the cornerstone of God's kingdom is grace, mercy and forgiveness, then it stands to reason that only the one who has been sinned against in the worst possible way can be the cornerstone.

Only the one who has been denied, betrayed, fallen asleep on, and run away from...

Only the one who has been tortured and hung on a cross ...

Only that one can be the foundation of God's kingdom of grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Only the one we crushed on a cross can put back together our crushed lives.

Only the one we dis-membered on a garbage dump can re-member the trash heap of our broken lives.

Only the one who was resurrected can resurrect us to be the people who produce the fruits of the kingdom.

To quote Ernest Becker from Denial of Death, “the hardest thing is not even the death, but the rebirth, because it means that for the first time, we shall be reborn not as gods but as human beings...shorn of all our defenses, projects, and claims.” In other words, we will be resurrected as human beings...totally dependent on the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God...and that is terrifying

And so, we reject the one who comes to tell us the truth about ourselves...

And yet, the one who is rejected... the one who is denied and betrayed... tortured and crucified...

becomes the cornerstone of a kingdom of forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

And that is the one we meet at this table. The one who is the cornerstone of a kingdom of mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

So, come. Come to the table and taste the fruit of the kingdom.

Taste the fruit of the kingdom in the bread of mercy.

Taste the fruit of the kingdom in the wine of forgiveness.

Taste the fruit of grace... broken and shed for you.

Come to the table where Christ's brokenness meets our brokenness. Where broken meets broken...

And healing and resurrection are given. Amen.

# *Spirit in the Desert*

## **Opening Song**

### **Be Still**

Be Still, know that I am God.

### **Calm Me Lord**

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm.  
Still me Lord, keep me from harm.  
Let all the tumult within me cease.  
Enfold me Lord, in your peace.

## **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

## **The Meal**

### **Come Drink of Living Water**

Come drink of living water. Never thirst again.

## **Benediction**

### **The Lord Bless You and Keep You**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. To shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you. And give you peace....