



## Jesus the Garbage Man – TouchPoint for February 3, 2021

**TOUCH POINT**

**Mark 1:29-39 NRSV** <sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. <sup>31</sup> He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup> And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

<sup>35</sup> In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup> When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

<sup>38</sup> He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

<sup>39</sup> And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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

*"As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons."*

What a difference a month makes. Just a few short weeks ago we were celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany and the story of the kings...the 3 kings our tradition says. Those 3 great kings who brought those amazing gifts to Jesus. Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Precious gifts, special gifts. The best they had to offer.

And we were taught that those 3 kings were to be a model and example for us. That we were to bring our best gifts to God and if we couldn't bring gold, or incense or myrrh. We should bring our best talents and gifts to Jesus.

Kind of like the little drummer boy song that we are all so familiar with. Though to quote a pastor friend of mine, Dave Nagler, "If you're going to visit a first-time mom who has just given birth and her sleeping son, DON'T PLAY A DRUM! What were that boy's parents thinking?" Anyway, you get the idea even in the midst of that absurdity. Bring Jesus your best, whatever it is.

But what a difference a month makes.

*"As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons."*

That certainly is a far cry from gold, frankincense and myrrh. Isn't it?

*"As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons."*

With all due respect to Oswald Chambers, it would be hard to get the idea of "My Utmost for His Highest." from this gospel passage. It's more like, "My Garbage for Him Who Lives Amongst the Lowest."

*“My Garbage for Him Who Lives Amongst the Lowest.”*

*“As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.”*

What a difference a month makes. This passage follows on the heels of the man possessed with a demon walking into the synagogue where Jesus is teaching and presenting himself to Jesus. And here today, the Verses immediately following that story...

*“...they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.”*

There's something going on here. These are the first 2 stories in Mark's gospel of Jesus ministry. And they say not only something powerful about Jesus work in the world, but I think they something to us as well. What is it we are to bring to Jesus? To God?

You know, I was always taught to be like the 'Little Drummer Boy' and bring my best to Jesus. I was always taught that I needed to get all cleaned up to meet God, 'All Puurdy'.

Or as I said before, “My Utmost for His Highest.”

But last week's story and this week's story say something radically different. It's not my best I need to bring to God, but my worst, my brokenness, my garbage.

Can I say that? Can I say that God wants my garbage? Can I say that God wants to be a garbage dump in my life? God wants to take all the garbage of my life from me.

So, I can then take my best, my utmost, not to Him but out into the world He loves so much that He gave His only begotten Son.

God as garbage dump. Can we say that? Isn't that the symbolism of him being crucified on one? Outside the city walls...on and over a garbage dump.

God as garbage dump... or recycling center. Am I committing sacrilege and blasphemy???

And what of the church? Can we describe ourselves the same way? The church as a garbage dump ... or recycling center. For people to bring their brokenness. “Garbage Dump Lutheran Church.” I don't think we have too many of those on our church roster. Maybe I should have named that church I started something different than I did.

Now that's all fun to think about, but I'm not sure how far I want to personally take that. I mean, I don't think Eric would like it if he heard me talking to someone and they asked me where I worked and I said, “Spirit in the Desert” retreat center.

And then they ask, “Is it nice?” and I reply, “Well, actually, it's a dump.”

Can a garbage dump be a holy place? Can it be a place of the sacred? Isn't that the symbolism of Jesus being crucified on one? That even the garbage dumps of our lives are a place of God's presence and transformation, of recycling as it were.

Even the garbage of our lives become a sacred place of God's presence.

*“As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.”*

Perhaps John meant it when he wrote in his gospel that the 'Word' not only became flesh, “but dwelt among us.”

'Dwelt among us' in the brokenness, darkness, and garbage of our lives. Not “My Utmost for His Highest”, but “My Garbage for Him Who Lives Amongst the Lowest.”

I am struck by the 'down-to-earthiness' of Mark's gospel. That's probably why it's my favorite. Short and sweet and to the point. Jesus as garbage man and not the kind we have today that stay inside an air conditioned or heated truck and have a claw machine to pick up the cans. No, the old-fashioned kind that picked up the trash themselves and had it fall on them and over them. The kind that I'm sure didn't go home smelling sweet at the end of the day.

*“As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.”*

And he touched them...and held them...and got them on himself.

And it doesn't take place in the synagogue. It doesn't take place in our house of worship. What do we do with a God, with someone, who does most of their work outside of our houses of worship? Jesus heals one man in the synagogue, and countless others outside of it. And then at the end of this passage, as everyone is looking for Jesus, he moves out from Capernaum, and goes further into Gentile country.

GOD-FORSAKEN GENTILE COUNTRY.

What is Mark telling us? That it's possible for God to leave the building? That it's possible for God to live and move and breath outside of our hallowed halls?

I recently read an article that said those churches who have reopened in the pandemic have experienced a 33% drop in Sunday attendance. People are finding non-traditional ways to connect to the Mystery, the Divine. And that the church had better pay attention to this or risk its relevance in the post-pandemic world.

The author continued to state that the church needs to see itself as a place for connection, rather than simply a place of gathering. Or to put it in my own words, the church needs to see itself as a place where people rediscover themselves as being the salt of the earth, rather than being a salt-lick.

*“As soon as they left the synagogue... they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.”*

What do we do with those people who think God can be met outside of the synagogue, the church? Chastise them for not meeting Jesus in the house of worship? Tell them they need to go through a catechetical course first? Or at least let us send them a year's worth of offering envelopes?

That is our tendency isn't it? Become a part of our tribe and then you can participate in its benefits, in our hallowed halls. But listen to the last part of this passage again.

*“In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.”*

*And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; **for that is what I came to do.**”*

Simon hunts for Jesus, and once he finds him, Jesus goes on his own hunting journey... **“For that is what I came to do.”**

The hunting isn't over once we find Jesus, it is only beginning. And as much as we may want to stay in the place where we found Jesus, and maybe even build a house of worship ... Jesus simply won't stay there.

Because you see, there is more brokenness in the world to be healed. There are more demons to be cast out. There is more garbage to be collected ... and recycled as it were.

The garbage collector isn't finished once he's gone by my house and collected me.

There are still more homes and neighborhoods, and towns and villages to collect.

Because that's what the Christ, the garbage man, came to do.

Amen.

# **Spirit in the Desert**

## **Opening Songs**

### **Be Still**

Be Still, know that I am God

### **You Lord Are In This Place**

You Lord are in 1)...this place.  
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.  
Your presence fills it.  
Your presence is peace.

## **Bible Passage**

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

## **Touchpoint**

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

### **Dwell Among Us**

Keep moving and living and breathing in us  
Keeping working and singing and speaking through us  
You dwell among us...  
With all this life I long to see, more of You and less of me  
Lord send Your spirit here to work in us

## **The Meal**

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

## **Benediction**

### **Let Your Servant**

Let your servant now go in peace, O Lord  
Now go in peace according to your word