



TOUCH POINT

Crazy Jesus – Touchpoint for June 2, 2021

Mark 3:20-35 (MSG) ²⁰⁻²¹ Jesus came home and, as usual, a crowd gathered—so many making demands on him that there wasn't even time to eat. His friends heard what was going on and went to rescue him, by force if necessary. They suspected he was believing his own press.

²²⁻²⁷ The religion scholars from Jerusalem came down spreading rumors that he was working black magic, using devil tricks to impress them with spiritual power. Jesus confronted their slander with a story: “Does it make sense to send a devil to catch a devil, to use Satan to get rid of Satan? A constantly squabbling family disintegrates. If Satan were fighting Satan, there soon wouldn't be any Satan left. Do you think it's possible in broad daylight to enter the house of an awake, able-bodied man, and walk off with his possessions unless you tie him up first? Tie him up, though, and you can clean him out.

²⁸⁻³⁰ “Listen to this carefully. I'm warning you. There's nothing done or said that can't be forgiven. But if you persist in your slanders against God's Holy Spirit, you are repudiating the very One who forgives, sawing off the branch on which you're sitting, severing by your own perversity all connection with the One who forgives.” He gave this warning because they were accusing him of being in league with Evil.

³¹⁻³² Just then his mother and brothers showed up. Standing outside, they relayed a message that they wanted a word with him. He was surrounded by the crowd when he was given the message, “Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside looking for you.” ³³⁻³⁵ Jesus responded, “Who do you think are my mother and brothers?” Looking around, taking in everyone seated around him, he said, “Right here, right in front of you—my mother and my brothers. Obedience is thicker than blood. The person who obeys God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”

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

The New Revised Standard Version starts out our passage this way,

People were saying,
"He has gone out of his mind."

Or in other words ... JESUS IS CRAZY!!!

I love the gospel of Mark. It is so straight forward. It's nothing like John's gospel with a running dialogue between heaven and earth and the Jewish and Greek worlds. It doesn't have near the amount of parables of Matthew and Luke. It ends with no resurrection appearances. It simply tells the story of one who heals, forgives and transforms. We are only in the third chapter of Mark and already everyone in power has turned against him. The political and religious leaders, even his family. And why?! All Jesus has done to this point is heal, cast out demons, and pronounce forgiveness. And yet, there is this huge amount of anger and hostility towards him because he doesn't do it within the political and religious systems of the day. He simply comes on the scene and does the Mystery... does the Divine...does God...freely...graciously.

And all of our little schemes, our little kingdoms and fiefdoms... all of our systems and structures be damned...for they count for nothing. In fact, they seem to inhibit us. They seem to get in the way. We have fallen so in love with our systems and structures...and the power and benefit they give US... that we have forgotten the purpose they were supposed to serve...to be a blessing to others.

“He is out of his mind.” “He is of Satan.” In other words, ... “He's crazy.”

Now if there were two groups of people who should have gotten what Jesus is about, you would think it would be his family and the religious leaders. But so wrapped up are they in themselves, worried about the effects of what he is doing on them and their place in the world... they fail to see what Jesus is doing for others. For the hurting and lonely...for the fringe and the forgotten. For those defined as beyond hope and evil.

Jesus doesn't follow the prescribed order. He isn't subservient to the system. “The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath.” He had previously said.

And that doesn't sit well with them... because they were in charge of the Sabbath and they thought that put them in charge of humanity.

And let's be clear... it doesn't set well with us either. We love our systems and structures. We who stand at the top of the food chain, love our food chain... Our economic, and social food chain. We love its order and structure because we have mastered it and it feeds us. And woe to anyone who upsets that food chain. They must be out of their mind or of the devil... They must be CRAZY!!!

Gerhard Forde puts it well in his book, “Where God Meets Man.”

Our religious, political, economic, patriotic dreams, all the myths on which we feed and delude ourselves lead us astray. We are never content to stay here and take care of our fellow human beings and the good earth. Our religious dreams seduce us into despising the earth; our political and patriotic dreams delude us so that we kill and maim our brothers and sisters; our economic dreams entice us so that we let our fellow humans starve. We are always on the way to somewhere else, to some other kingdom, and we think we have found some magic formula to get us there. We are “climbing Jacob's ladder”. Or we are going to make the world safe for democracy. Or we are going towards some capitalistic economic heaven of “free enterprise and individual initiative.” The principles of *laissez faire* and “the law of supply and demand” are going to get us there automatically—no matter how many unfortunates are ground to dust in the process.... Everyone is going to be in the same boat as everyone else—even if that means we have to depress, slaughter, and imprison those who refuse to get on board.

And so, when Jesus comes along... and simply does the Mystery... does the Divine...does God...freely... He meets resistance...massive resistance... for disrupting our food chain.

And so when Jesus comes along, the scribes, and all of us, end up sounding something like the old man in Pink Floyd's “The Wall”:

“If you don't eat your meat, you can't have any pudding. How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?”

Yet, here is Jesus handing out the pudding. To anyone and everyone. Whether they first ate their meat or not...simply because they are hungry. HOW CRAZY IS THAT?

And our economic and social food chain collapses.

Richard Rohr writes,

Following Jesus is not a “salvation scheme” or a means of creating social order as much as it is a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the world. Some people are overly invested in religious

ceremonies, rituals, and rules about naming who's in and who's out. They love to protect boundaries. Jesus did not come to create a spiritual elite or an exclusionary system. He invited people to “follow” him ...

Our vocation is a willingness to hold—and transform—the dark side of things..... instead of reacting against them, denying them, or projecting our anxiety elsewhere. Without such a willingness to hold the very real tension of paradox, most lives end in negativity, blaming, or cynicism...

And that appears to be the problem with the scribes and Jesus' family... and I dare say... with us...We can only hope to name and exclude the brokenness, sin, and evil of our world... and we end up believing that is enough. We build our society and culture around the fear of it all. And when someone comes along who can transform it, it threatens the very foundation of our world. And we must dismiss it as satanic or crazy. For example, Father Michael Lapsley, when he was here, talked about how in Sweden and Denmark, I believe it was, they are closing prisons down. Closing them down... because they don't have enough prisoners... and the prisoners they do have they treat incredibly well, as humans... rather than trying to dehumanize them... They are CLOSING DOWN PRISONS...And when he said that you could almost hear a collective gasp in the room at the incredulity of that fact... and the impossibility of it happening in this culture... in this country.

Matt Skinner writes about this passage this way,

The Jerusalem scribes' pronouncement offers a plain illustration of what Jesus means when he mentions, later in the scene, the very specific instance of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Those scribes have dismissed the possibility of God's restoration, for they write it off as deception. They show themselves devoid of hope and openly contemptuous of God's work. Around them, people are being set free from their demons. People are experiencing wholeness and life. People's dignity is acknowledged. Jesus promises that sins and “whatever blasphemies” may occur will prove no obstacle to people's renewal. And yet the scribes scoff and denounce all of this as false and dangerous.

In other words, ... He's crazy.

Yet for Jesus, all is forgivable. And we must be clear that what we mean by forgiveness is something much more than escaping punishment or responsibility for a misdeed. Forgiveness means freedom, restoration, transformation, renewal and healing. And there is nothing outside of it. There is no one and nothing outside of the transforming, renewing, resurrection power of the Divine, the Mystery.

The only unforgivable sin seems to be a renunciation of the possibility of divine renewal.

In other words, the only unforgivable sin seems to be believing there is an unforgivable sin, something outside the scope of divine grace, something beyond the Holy Spirit and Her power to heal and restore.

Which brings us to quite a conundrum...

If the one thing that grieves the Holy Spirit is when we believe that there is a sin that is bigger than Divine grace... Or if, what is blasphemy towards the Holy Spirit is believing that there is a sin that is greater than, mightier than, more powerful than the Holy Spirit ... Then we have a problem, because that sin... a sin bigger than Divine grace doesn't exist.

So, is saying there is an 'unforgivable sin' the 'unforgivable sin'? If it is, then there is an 'unforgivable sin'. And that would make the statement true that there is an 'unforgivable sin' and then that statement wouldn't be a sin...because it's true. So, the only way to make that statement a sin would be to make it

forgivable. So, the belief that there is an unforgivable sin must be forgivable as well.

Got it!!! Good!!! I hope that cleared things up... Or just call me crazy!!!

Or to put it another way, quit trying to figure out what is beyond the Spirit's reach and what is unforgivable. Quit trying to limit the reach of the Spirit. Quit trying to quantify, qualify, or categorize the Spirit. Like the wind, She goes where She will and we only see and feel the effects.

It isn't about names. It isn't about labels. Who is my family? Who are my brothers and sisters? Not those who carry my name... but those who do the will of the Father.

A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet. A healing by the Spirit, no matter what name you call it is still HEALING.

You see, for Jesus, the Holy Spirit is not something you can name and claim. It is so far beyond you and me that no family or religious system can contain it. It is free to blow wherever it will and it catches up all kinds of people in its presence.

Or to quote Howie Wennes in an email he sent me one time, "Blow Spirit blow...and help us to hang on." I think Howie's caught a little bit of the Jesus' crazies.... It is contagious, you know.

But then again, I think we have all caught a bit of the Jesus' crazies.

I mean, it's crazy to think that with a little bread and wine we can be re-connected, re-joined, re-membered to the Divine... to the Mystery of life.

It is crazy to think that with a little bread and wine we can be re-connected, re-joined, re-membered to one another and to all who eat and drink from the earth... And yet we do.

Because there is no one and nothing beyond Divine grace and mercy. No one beyond transformation and resurrection. No one beyond being re-stored and re-membered to the Divine.

And yes, I realize how crazy that may sound in our society that worships "3 strikes and you're out'" and "zero tolerance".

But go ahead and call me crazy... I'll be in good company.

Go crazy people!!! Go crazy!!!..... With grace!!!

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Hearken to My Voice

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Hearken to my voice, O Lord when I call. Have mercy on me and answer me.
You speak in my heart, and say, "Seek my face". Your face, Lord will I seek.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

You are the Center, Lord

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd.)

You are the center, you are my life. You are the center, O Lord of my life.
Come, Lord and guide me, Lord of my life. Send me your spirit, Lord of my life.
You are the center, you are my life. You are the center, O Lord of my life.
Come, Lord and heal me, Lord of my life.
Come, Lord, and teach me, Lord of my life.
You are the center, O Lord of my life.
Give me your spirit and teach me your ways.
Give me your peace, Lord, and set me free.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer.

(Robert Stone, The Cambridge Singers, John Rutter)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(National Lutheran Choir, Peter C. Lukin)

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....