



## Shake It Off – TouchPoint for June 30, 2021

**Mark 6:1-13 (NRSV)** He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”

And they took offense at him.

<sup>4</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” <sup>5</sup> And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup> And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. <sup>7</sup> He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. <sup>10</sup> He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. <sup>11</sup> If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup> So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. <sup>13</sup> They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

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

*He said to them, “If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”*

And I’ve got to tell you, my heart leaps for joy when I hear this.

Back then, see, everyone knew exactly what this meant.

Everybody who tried to be the least little bit righteous did the shaking off the dust thing. Shaking off the dust is what you did when you crossed paths with a Gentile, or bumped into a bleeding woman, or made contact with anything dead or defiled.

Shaking off the dust is like crossing to the other side of the road to avoid a half-dead man lying naked on your side of the road.

Shaking off the dust is a way to hold yourself apart, keep yourself clean.

Go ahead. Read the biblical scholars. They all agree: Shaking off the dust on your feet is a little bit like thumbing your nose or giving someone the finger. It is a way to say:

“You’re beneath me, below me.

You’re unclean.

You’re an Outsider and always will be.

I am better than you.

I am purer than you.

I am closer to God than you.”

*He said to them, "If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."*

Is that good news or what?

Does your heart not also get a little shiver of delight when Jesus justifies how pure and holy and righteous you are?

Mine does. Because here it is, straight from the rabbi's mouth: Permission.

Permission to hold myself apart ...

to consider myself better than ...

to maybe even be a little bit judgmental, in a nice Christian way of course ...

to testify against the Other with a gesture of disdain.

Except.

Except if THAT'S true, it would be the one and only time in his life when Jesus held up the purity system as a model for anything!

As Marcus Borg wrote in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, "In the message and activity of Jesus, we see an alternative social vision: a community shaped not by the ethos and politics of purity, but by the ethos and politics of compassion."

So when this saying about shaking off the dust comes up in Mark, and also in Matthew and Luke, we have to look hard at this rabbi's particular ethos of compassion, this rabbi's peculiar love of dust, and this rabbi's penchant for taking familiar rituals and turning them upside down.

Because this passage is a turning point, see, a transition from being the ones who follow Jesus to being the ones who are sent into the world to be like he is and to do what he does. And we can do no good in the world if we are dragging around old religious baggage.

*"He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff;  
no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics."*

You go on the journey, in other words, pretty much naked.

You submit yourself to the mercy of every stranger you meet.

You ask for directions. For food. For shelter. For toileting facilities.

You ask for the nearest urgent care when your foot gets infected, and you hope someone will offer to pay the bill.

You ask for a place where you might bathe in private, and you sure wish you had a second tunic.

You ask. You ask because you are dependent.

You are dependent on the compassion of others.

Stripped of our acquisitions, affluence, and achievements, I wonder: How would we treat the world differently? How would we touch and be touched by, as Jim said last week, "the pain and broken-ness and dis-ease" of the world?

Well, let's start with the dust on our sandals.

There was a saying back then about what it meant to be a disciple.

It was a saying that came from following your rabbi down one road and then another, day after day after day, until your robe was caked with the dust of your rabbi.  
Until your feet weren't at home unless they were covered with the dust of your rabbi.  
Until you had given your life and your heart and your soul to learning from and trying to be like your rabbi.  
And the saying goes like this: "May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi."

Perhaps it is **HIS** dust Jesus is saying we need to shake off – a dust which has nothing to do with purity or performance but instead, a dust that has everything to do with being human and being humble and being ... well, this is the hard part ... an occasional failure.

Even Jesus wasn't welcome everywhere he went – not even his hometown.  
Even Jesus was refused and rejected by many, including all of us from time to time.

From one of my favorite poems by Steve Garnaas-Homes, with a bit of a mix of metaphors:

*God will sow you in the world  
and sometimes you won't belong.  
Sometimes people will misunderstand.  
Sometimes they'll dislike you or use you.  
And sometimes you'll blossom.*

*Sometimes you'll try to sow seeds of justice  
but you'll do a lousy job.  
Or do it well, but folks will resist.  
Or they'll care but they'll be overwhelmed by an unjust society.  
And sometimes your witness will bear fruit.*

*Failure,  
failure,  
Failure,  
fruit.  
All of it grace. All of it.*

To shake off the dust you've picked up following Jesus is to leave something holy behind.

And though it might get swept out the door right behind you, that dust will linger for a while in the air of that place, and settle on the skin and maybe even float into the dreams of those people. Because that's what dust does. It hangs around. It seeps into things.

Dare we hope – as we leave a place where we are not welcome - to leave behind a little peace, a little joy, to leave a tinge of compassion hanging in the air?

Dare we stay true to who Jesus is, both in us and on us?

Shake it off. Shake off just a bit of your holy dust.

**AMEN.**

# **Spirit in the Desert**

## **Opening Songs**

### **Be Still**

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

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

(Keith Duke)

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)*

### **Inpoured Spirit**

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd.)

Inpoured Spirit, deep and still.  
Love eternal, the world to fill.

## **The Meal**

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

(Taize Reflections)

## **Benediction**

### **Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace**

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.  
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.  
Deep peace of Christ to you.