



TOUCH POINT

The Other Side of the Storm – TouchPoint for June 16, 2021

Mark 4:35-41 (NRSV) 35 On that day, when evening had come, he (Jesus) said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”

36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

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

“Let us go across to the other side.”

It's the last place any of us want to go. It's the last place any of us want to be. No one wants to be on the 'other' side... we want everyone on our side. We love our side.

Now without giving too much of a geography and history lesson, when Jesus says “Let us go to the other side” he is talking about going into Gentile country. The other side of this lake is Gentile country.

And so to go to the other side is to leave all that is known and comfortable, all that is defined as proper and good, all that is seen as blessed by God.

To go to the other side is to go into “GOD FORSAKEN COUNTRY” filled with “GOD FORSAKEN PEOPLE”! It's the last place any of us want to go. It's the last place any of us want to be.

Think of how we use the word “side” in our language. We are to choose sides...pick a side...take a side.

“Whose side are you on?”

And after we have made our determination, then the other side becomes the 'dark side' or if you have a sense of humor, the 'far side.' No matter how you view it. It is the 'other' side. And it needs to stay over there. We don't believe in going to the 'other' side. Heck, in politics, it's a cardinal sin to simply cross the aisle.

As a nation, we used to want others to come over to our side: “Give me your tired, your poor...your wretched refuse.” And while that's not as good as going to the other side, it at least shows an openness to the other side.

These days... we simply want to build walls to keep 'others' on the 'other side.' And we will rip children from their parents to keep it that way...put them in detention centers, prisons, and internment camps ... and some in our society will even claim that is God's will. And we are being Christian and obedient to God while doing it.

God save us from our American Christianity!!!

When did following human made laws become a greater rule than loving one's neighbor as oneself? I thought Jesus clearly settled what is the most important rule or law to follow when he was asked,

“What's the most important rule or law to follow?”

...and he said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and your neighbor as yourself.”

I guess that's the difference between being a Christian and a being a Biblican. One tries to follow Christ, the other picks and chooses Bible passages to justify inflicting pain and suffering on others.

So, when Jesus calls us to go with him to the other side, it will cause all kinds of chaos. It will cause all kinds of disruption. Make no mistake about it, to go to the other side will cause problems. It will not be smooth sailing and all kinds of gale forces will resist it – push and pull against it. Why those forces will even quote Bible verses against you. A storm is always created when we take sides. And apparently, even more so when we don't.

When Jesus says “*Let us go to the other side*” he is talking about leaving all that is known and comfortable, all that is defined as proper and good, all that is seen as blessed by God.

To go to the other side is to go into GOD FORSAKEN COUNTRY filled with GOD FORSAKEN PEOPLE!

And so when Jesus says, “*Let us go to the other side*”, he is inviting his disciples to die to the old world of taking sides, choosing sides, and picking sides.

You see, to go to the other side will involve a death... and resurrection. A death to our old, comfortable ways, our old comfortable sides.

And perhaps that can give us a different perspective on the disciple's cry, "Do you not care that we are about to perish?" The disciple's cry speaks to more than a storm on a lake. It is the cry of all who go with Jesus, who follow Jesus to the other side. And while Jesus does calm the storm, perhaps their perishing is exactly what needs to happen.

The NRSV translation uses an interesting phrase. It says, “*The wind ceased, and there was a DEAD calm.*” So while Jesus does calm the storm, perhaps their perishing is exactly what needs to happen, and does happen to them... in the DEAD calm.

The disciples are different when they arrive on the other side. Their world has been turned upside down. They are in a world they do not understand.

“What then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?”

They have arrived on the other side. And on this other side is new life. A new way of living. A new way of seeing. Not living in dualism, us/them but in non-dualism, we/us.

But they aren't done yet. They continue to move into the other side, into its depths and pain and suffering.

In the following verses we see that the first place Jesus goes when he gets to the other side is to see a 1) demon filled...2) Gentile man...3) living amongst dead bodies... 4) surrounded by pigs.

Now, for those of you not too familiar with first century Jewish culture, any ONE of those four things makes you an outsider, puts you on the other side, the dark side. When you combine all four of them... well let's just say Mark is brilliant at satire.

And yet, on this side, this other side, this dark side...is life. Even the 'other side' is not out of reach from Divine healing.

For Jesus:

THERE IS NO GOD-FORSAKEN COUNTRY...THERE ARE NO GOD-FORSAKEN PEOPLE.

Jesus invites his disciples to the other side, and the journey is fraught with storms, and chaos, and fear and trembling. It is not an easy journey to the other side of taking sides. To the other side of the storm.

It is a journey from death to life...from perishing to flourishing. On the other side of perishing is new life. On the other side of death is resurrection.

Now when I say "perish"... I spell it p-**E**-r-i-s-h. Not p-**A**-r-i-s-h.

On the other side of p-**E**-r-i-s-h is new life. I'm not sure what's on the other side of p-**A**-r-i-s-h. And I sometimes wonder if the church knows either or if it even wants anything beyond it.

And now I can't help but think of that verse in Proverbs that reads, “Where there is no vision the people perish.” And I wonder if perish in that verse shouldn't be spelled with an 'a' (parish) rather than an 'e' (perish)?

Oh well. Back to the passage...

It is not an easy journey to the other side of taking sides. To the other side of the storm. And yet no matter which side you are on, the Christ is there. Tearing down the walls that divide. Erasing the lines, we love to draw.

We keep taking sides, choosing sides, picking sides. Jesus keeps erasing them.
In Christ there is no Gentile or Jew, male or female, slave or free...FOR ALL ARE ONE IN CHRIST.
Which brings up an interesting question? When you're on the side of the One who takes no sides,
whose side are you on?

In the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus went to the side of the betrayer, the denier, the weak
and fearful. In fact, he didn't just go to their side. He placed himself within them.

It seems the only side the Christ wants to be on... is on the inside...of you and me...and all people...

“The body and blood of Christ, given for YOU and for ALL people!!!”

You see there are no God-forsaken countries and there are no God-forsaken people... not even you
and me...and hopefully, not even American Christianity as it is expressed by our political and
religious leaders.

And so we pray:

God, come to our side and take us to the other side.

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....