



TOUCH POINT

## Food Fight! TouchPoint for July 28, 2021

**Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15**<sup>2</sup> The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.

<sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.’” <sup>10</sup> And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. <sup>11</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses and said, <sup>12</sup> “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

<sup>13</sup> In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup> When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

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

*“If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread;”*

It would be funny, if it weren't so sad. The Israelites, freed from slavery, come face to face with freedom and what do they do? They pray to God that they could be back in the 'security of slavery'... or is it 'slaves to security'?

What is it about us that prefers the slavery of the past, to the freedom of an open ended future?

This story isn't just about the Israelites coming out of Egypt. It is all of our stories. When confronted with the freedom of an open ended future, led by God, we prefer the security and slavery that the world has to offer.

And it isn't just about politics. It's true in our personal lives as well. Dead end jobs, unhealthy relationships, faith communities that tell you God is unconditional love, and then start applying the rules you have to follow to be loved unconditionally.

Cultural norms, which we are told, if we will just follow, and play by the rules, security can be ours.

All of these things lull us into a false sense of security. And sometimes not even that, and yet we hang on to them, because we have been led to believe there is no other option beyond the job we have, the relationship we're in, or the God we were threatened with in our childhood.

Throughout our lives, God keeps calling us, leading us, freeing us, into a future of divine Mystery. And we keep looking back, to a romanticized past that never existed, and we try to make great again, that which was never great to begin with.

“Freedom! Freedom!” We cry. And these days the cry of freedom is just an intellectually lazy way to justify my being selfish. And demanding I should always get to do whatever I want.

The way we use the word ‘freedom’ today is such a far cry from what St. Paul means when he talks about ‘freedom in Christ’. For Paul, freedom in Christ means freedom from one’s ego, and freedom for service to others. Today, freedom means I get to feed my ego in any way I want. And that is not freedom, but bondage of the self, to the self.

‘American freedom’, and ‘Christian freedom’ are diametrically opposed. And the sooner we in the church learn that, the better off we will be.

Why is it that those who cry “Freedom” these days, are the ones most willing to impose Marshall Law to enforce it? How is that freedom?

Why is it we in the church, prefer the Law, to grace and freedom? When push comes to shove, we are so much more eager to LAY DOWN THE LAW!!! Rather than LAY DOWN THE GRACE! Give us a god of reward and punishment, a god of the Law, rather than grace and freedom! The responsibility that comes with grace and freedom is almost too much to bear.

The story of the exodus is not a one-time story in past history. It is our daily story, and our daily struggle. We seem to be “in bondage to our history, and cannot free ourselves.”

And yet our biblical passage keeps reminding us that we have a God who is always calling us into a new way of living. Calling us to trust in the source and creator of life, to lead us into life.

My friend, Henry Rojas, has often said, that when an addict has gone through treatment and is in successful recovery, the people he or she often has the most difficulty with is their immediate family. Because those people have spent years, if not decades, trying to “Fix” the person, and when the person is freed from the addiction, the family doesn’t know what to do with itself. And often reverts back to the old way of relating.

The addiction to security, to our old ways, makes us suspicious and wary of anything new. And so new jobs, new relationships, and new ways of experiencing the Divine are all approached with a decisional hesitancy. We approach them “With our hands to the plow, but still looking back” to paraphrase Jesus.

James Baldwin described it well when he wrote:

**Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety. And at such a moment, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will bring forth, one clings to what one knew, or dreamed that one possessed. Yet, it is only when a person is able, without bitterness of self-pity, to surrender a dream they have long possessed... that they are set free... they have set themselves free... for higher dreams, for greater privileges.**

The ‘letting go’ is a time of wilderness wanderings. It is a constant journey. I don’t know if we ever see the end of it in our lifetimes. But the promise of scripture is that the God who was there in our bondage and time of slavery, is also there with us in our wilderness wanderings... Is there with us in our letting go.

Because, while we are called to let go, we are never let go of. Because the God who “... has the whole world, in His hands”, is the one in whom we live and move and have our being... and is the one from whom nothing can separate us.

It is only in this one who graciously provides for daily sustenance, that one can find true freedom and an open ended future. All the other powers and people can only provide a closed system, of rules and regulations, of reward and punishment. Your world is scripted. Your life is scripted. If you only play your part, all will be well. This is the system the pharaohs of the world want you to live and stay in.

Some of us have learned to play this system well. Some of us have had the system set up to benefit those who look like us. Some of us, can't see any other system, or way.

*“If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread;”*

Some of us, would prefer the death that comes with certainty, to a life of trust and Mystery.

And yet what is so amazing about this passage, is that these complainers are heard by God. And answered by God. And God's answer isn't anything like how I responded to my kids when they constantly complained to me.

**“You want to complain? I'll give you something to complain about!!!”**

No, God responds with generosity, with grace, with sustenance.

The God who has set them free will sustain them in their freedom, on an ongoing basis, with daily food and nourishment. Daily food and nourishment that comes from the abundance of God. **“Give us this day, our daily bread.”**

What a contrast that is to Pharaoh's view of food. Where one is to hoard, accumulate, and possess as much as possible, because the world and God cannot be trusted.

It is, one might say, a food fight. Over how one sees the world and receives from the world. With a mentality of abundance or scarcity. Trust or fear.

It is, one might say, a food fight. Only God is not John Belushi, and Pharaoh is not Dean Wormer, and what's at stake is something more than college graduation, though that would be a fun analogy to play with.

This is the promise: that the one in whom we live and move and have our being has not sent us into freedom alone. We are not on our own. The daily abundance of God's grace can free us from the fears of the world and of ourselves.

We have been set free. The false securities that Pharaoh and the world try to offer only enslave us. The if-then, reward and punishment, and scarcity mentality kind of politics, philosophies, and theologies, have shown themselves to be slave-drivers. American freedom makes us slaves to consumerism and our most selfish desires.

If we're going to have real freedom, it has to free us not only from the ways of the world, but from our own selfish fears and desires as well. We need a freedom that frees us from ourselves, to be ourselves.

This is the freedom of grace and forgiveness.

You are not your past. You are not your fears. Neither hold sway.

In the abundance of God's ongoing grace, you are free. There is nothing holding you back.

That truth can be unsettling. It can thrust us into a wilderness of disorientation and disequilibrium. And the great desire can be to go back.

But you can't go back. There is no going back.

Because once you've tasted the bread of grace...

Once you've drunk the wine of forgiveness...

And once you've sat at the table of love and acceptance...

You can't go back. There's no going back to Pharaoh and his ways.

You're free... to be.

**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.