



Eternal Life is Now – TouchPoint for August 4, 2021

John 6:35, 41-51 (NRSV) ³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

TOUCH POINT ⁴¹ Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.

⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

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

“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

It's not what we expect. It's hardly ever what we expect. Those connections with the Divine...those touchpoints as it were. They come in ways and through others that we would least expect, in ways we least understand.

More and more I'm finding it's all a mystery to me. Perhaps that's why these days I am more inclined to speak of God as the Mystery than I am anything else. I just keep meeting the Divine in the most unexpected places, through the most unexpected people.

Common everyday folk... some of whom I have known all along, some not. Those I know, I know their family, I know their story. There isn't anything special about them. They are not saints in the way I normally think of saints.

And in fact, they are often the furthest thing from being a saint, or at least their life history would say so...

and yet...

through them...heaven comes down!!!

“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

Why is it we have so cornered God? So contained, tamed and defined God? Why is it we are so sure we have figured out how God works, and the only ways God can work, and the only people through whom

God can work?

Contain, tame, and define. Control, possess and manage.

This is the God we want. This is the God we worship. A God who will work **only** within our system, in order to validate **only** our system.

And then there is the MYSTERY!!!

Uncontainable, uncontrollable, untamable and unmanageable.

Working through those we have long since written off, overlooked, dismissed.

“Truly I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you.”

YIKES!!!

“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven?”

I sit in my white, middle class, American Christianity and I am sure I know who the Christ is and how the Christ works. I'm sure he came from a nice respectable family. I definitely know what he looks like: blond or at least light brown hair and blue eyes. Isn't that how all first century Jews looked???

And I'm absolutely positive 'HE' is a 'HE'!!!

No tattoos. A nice haircut – certainly not dyed blue or purple – though a few highlights are acceptable, even for a guy.

I'm sure he has a nice job, corporate probably, maybe even a job in the church, and the higher up the better or some other non-profit.

He certainly hasn't had any stumbles in his life. I'm positive I wouldn't meet him in the beggars standing on the street corner, or in the sick, or the prison population. That's the last place I would find him. He might send me there to help **those people**, but he would never be one of **those people**.

And yet...

through them...heaven comes down!!!

*“For I was hungry and you gave **ME**... I was thirsty and you gave **ME**... I was sick... I was in prison”*

OH MY!!!

“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven?”

Who is it we expect to come down from heaven? Who is it we are looking for? Obviously, someone just like us or at least like that ideal self we pretend to be. Someone who exemplifies the values and priorities of

our individual selves, our society, our country.

And yet, those things, the values and priorities of our individual selves, our society, and our country are temporary things, not eternal things. And it's eternal life Jesus wants us to think about, not temporal life.

A quick definition:

Eternal life is not primarily or even secondarily concerned about a time frame. It isn't so much about the length of life, as the quality of life, the richness of life. It isn't a future time but a present time. It has this sense of constant newness. Eternal life is life that is constantly renewed. Eternal life is a life lived in the things that are constantly making us new. Rejuvenating us. Revitalizing us. Resurrecting us from our dead-end ways of living. This is what it means to have or experience eternal life.

And what are those things? They are love and grace and forgiveness. These are the things that renew us and resurrect us. And it is these things, that often come out of nowhere, or out of the people we least expect. It is these things, that come down from heaven, as it were, and bring new life, Eternal life to us.

Let me give you an example:

When I was in my early twenties, I was a missionary/English teacher in Japan. During my second year there, I flew my parents out for a couple of weeks to live with me and experience my daily life. They went to all my classes and met all of my students.

Now, I was the teacher, the 'sensei', so I was held in high regard. I was to be treated with the utmost respect and deference. But when my dad showed up, I slipped a couple of rungs down the ladder. Now, I was no longer at the top of the food chain of respect. There was someone who was above me, and it was my father. He was now the one treated with the highest respect and reverence. It was fascinating to watch him react to all the attention. Towards the end of our time together, I asked him what his experience had been like. His eyes got watery and he said, "Thirty-some years ago, I/we came over to these people with a gun and an atomic bomb, now you have come over with a Bible."

And he broke down and wept.

In that moment, my dad had experienced eternal life. Heaven had come down to him.

I seriously doubt, that thirty-some years earlier, as he laid down to sleep in the jungles of the South Pacific during WWII, that he could have imagined one day he would be met with open arms by the Japanese people. In his mind, they would have been the last people on earth to break open his heart... to renew and resurrect him from the trauma of that war.

"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven?"

Who has been Jesus to you?

Who has brought heaven down to earth for you?

Who has gifted you eternal life?

Amen

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)

Be Still, know that I am God

Creator Spirit, Come

(Keith Duke, Sacred Weave)

Creator Spirit, Come. Renew the face of the earth.
Kindling Spirit, Come. Enflame our waiting hearts.
Anointing Spirit, Come. Pour forth on us anew.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Come O Lord and Set Us Free

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Come, O Lord and set us free. Give/Bring your people peace.
Come, O Lord and set us free. Come Lord Jesus, Come.

1. And take our guilt away. Give us your pardon Lord.
2. Free from our self-obsession. Free from each fond possession.
3. Free to affirm each other...as sister and as brother

Reshape the world you made. Let what your hand created...be always celebrated.

The Meal

Lord's Prayer

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

Benediction

A Blessing

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd. Complete Chants Vol.1)

May the Lord bless you.
May the Lord protect you and guide you.
May His strength uphold you.
His light shine upon you.
His peace surround you.
His love enfold you.
May the Lord bless you.