



Jesus is JUST KID-ding – TouchPoint for September 15, 2021

Mark 9:30-37 (MSG) ³⁰⁻³² Leaving there, they went through Galilee. He didn't want anyone to know their whereabouts, for he wanted to teach his disciples. He told them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed to some people who want nothing to do with God. They will murder him. Three days after his murder, he will rise, alive." They didn't know what he was talking about, but were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was safe at home, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the road?" ³⁴ The silence was deafening—they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest. ³⁵ He sat down and summoned the Twelve. "So you want first place? Then take the last place. Be the servant of all."

³⁶⁻³⁷ He put a child in the middle of the room. Then, cradling the little one in his arms, he said, "Whoever embraces one of these children as I do, embraces me, and far more than me—God who sent me."

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

"The Son of Man is about to be betrayed... They will murder him. Three days after his murder, he will rise, alive."

And...

"they had been arguing with one another over who among them was greatest."

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to die. They were on the way for something else.

He spoke about his death. Death, the great equalizer. Death, that which would make him one with them and us. Death, that which would connect him with them and us.

Upon hearing him speak of death, the great equalizer, they started to argue about their inequality. Upon hearing him speak of his death, they began to speak of their survival, their salvation as it were, and their succession – where they would fall in the rankings.

They were discussing importance and rank – who amongst them was first, who second, who third, and who would be the last one. The last one: #12. The dreaded #12.

#12 would be like that kid you used to play with growing up. THAT KID, the one who when you would choose up sides was always the last one standing alone, by him or herself. And you would argue, not about who would get him, but who would have to take her. THAT KID. The one you would prefer to get serious about and say, "No KID-ding."

No one wants THAT KID... and no one wants to be THAT KID. When it comes to THAT KID, it's 'NO KID-ding'.

So the 12 were looking for a measure, for a criterion, for a norm, to establish a hierarchy after Jesus died that would keep them from being THAT KID. So they wouldn't end up THAT KID: #12.

Was it initiative? Then Peter would be first. Was it friendship? Then John. Business-mindedness? Philip. Political insight? Judas. Money? Matthew. Blood relation? James.

They didn't know what criterion it would be. They couldn't figure out what Jesus would do. So as they came home, they sat down and he sat down with them.

“What were you arguing about on the way?” he asked them.

They did not look up. They did not look at him. They looked at their knees, at their feet, at the earth in front of them. But they did not look at him. How could they tell him what they were arguing about? How could they tell him they were trying to avoid being #12? They were trying to avoid being THAT KID!!!

During their silence Jesus went out, through the open door and into the street. He had heard the noise of children playing games out there. He brought in one of the kids.

Is it hard to guess which one? Is it hard to guess which KID???

It was THAT KID!!! #12. A small little girl with wide-open eyes, and a hint of mischievousness. A runny nose and a bunch of thick black hair that was always tangled. Dirt stains no doubt on her clothes, with the attention span of a gnat. THAT KID!!! The one that drives all of us up a wall.

THAT KID!!! #12.

He put THAT KID in the middle of them and he said, *“Whoever embraces one of these children as I do embraces me, and far more than me—God who sent me.”*

In other words, THAT KID is as important as Christ.

THAT KID is as important as God. Why whoever heard of such a thing?

It makes us want to look at the Christ and say, “NO KID-ding?”

And Jesus response is, “JUST KID-ding!”

In other words, when we get serious we want to get kids, who symbolize all that is unimportant and trivial, out of the picture and we say... “NO KID-ding.” When Jesus wants to get serious he plops a KID in front of us and says, “JUST KID-ding.” JUST the least, JUST the unimportant, JUST the overlooked.

You see, when Jesus says, “JUST KID-ding.” He's NOT joking.

Because, there can be no #12s. There can be no THAT KID. There can be no arguing over who you have to take, who you have to care for, who is a part of your team.

You can't throw kids away, separate them from their parents, treat them as disposable.

It is exactly how we treat kids, the least and the unimportant. *That* is the issue.

Now that is a shock to our sensibilities.

Don't we much prefer Paul who said, "When I was a child, I thought like a child, I spoke like a child, I acted like a child but when I became a man, I put away childish ways."

The children, the kids, must be put away, put behind us, until they become like us.

And we must put away our child-likeness.

And so, I want to worship a god who will make me greater, stronger, bigger, and smarter than I am. That's why I want a god who is great, omnipotent, and omniscient. A god who can do great things for me – make me a higher up in the succession planning of the kingdom. Keep me from being the dreaded #12.

But here in this passage, I meet a very different kind of god. Here in this passage I meet the Mystery that speaks of the smallest, the least important, THAT KID, as the most important... As being on par with the Divine, the Christ.

Here in this passage I meet the Mystery that speaks of living a life of servanthood, rather than personal promotion, personal accomplishment, dare we even say ... personal salvation.

Jesus speaks of his death. The disciples focus on their personal survival, personal salvation. How will they save themselves through this process? How can they move on to bigger and greater things? Jesus calls them to forget all that. Forget focusing on your own salvation, your own survival. That is in the hands of the Mystery who created and sustains you.

Now, contrary to what all the religious crusades I've ever attended have emphasized, Jesus challenges us to see the focus of personal survival and salvation as antithetical to following him.

Let me repeat that: Jesus wants us to see the pursuit of personal salvation as antithetical to following him.

While your relationship with Jesus may be personal, it is not private and neither is your salvation, your healing, or your wholeness. Which, by the way is what the word 'salvation' means. It means 'healing,' 'wholeness,' 'completeness.' And none of that can you accomplish alone...in private...personally. That kind of focus on individual salvation is nothing but spiritual narcissism masquerading as personal piety, which is still narcissism. And it is that kind of trying to save oneself that Jesus said we need to die to in last week's passage.

If we are 'saved by grace', to use St. Paul's words, then we don't need to spend any time thinking or worrying about ourselves, our survival, our salvation, or our succession. Freed FROM thinking about ourselves – which I realize is about as un-American of a thought as you can get – we are freed FOR others, freed to see others as children of the Mystery.

Jesus goes out into the city streets and brings back a child and asks his disciples, "Do you see her? Do you SEE...HER?"

Because to SEE HER...is to see the Divine...the Mystery...the Christ

Jesus goes out into the city streets and brings back a child and asks his disciples, "Do you SEE...HER?" And then he pats her on the head and sends her back out into the world to play. And I can't help but think he followed her right out the door to play with her. Leaving us self-absorbed disciples to live with our own arguments about greatness and what must we do to be saved.

No, I can't help but think Jesus followed her right out the door to play with her.

Because for Jesus, JUST KID-ding is no joke.

Because for Jesus, JUST KID-ding around with THAT KID...#12... and ALL who are like her, is to encounter the Mystery...the Divine... the Christ.

Because apparently, the last kid chosen by us, is the first one chosen by the Christ.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Come Drink of Living Water

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Come drink of living water. Never thirst again.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Hallelujah

(Jeff Buckley)

I heard there was a secret cord that David played and it pleased the Lord, but you don't really care for music do you? It goes like this the fourth the fifth. The minor falls, the major lift. The fallen king composing hallelujah. Hallelujah...

Baby I've been here before, I've seen this room and I've walked this floor. I use to live alone before I knew you. I've seen your flag on the marble arch. And love is not victory march. It's cold and it's a broken hallelujah. Hallelujah...

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Monastery Choir of St. John of San Francisco)

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.