



TOUCH POINT

## Forgiveness Leads to Repentance– Touchpoint for May 25, 2022

**Luke 24:44-53** <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

<sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

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

“... repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed...”

There are very few scripture passages that make me do a double take. This isn't my first rodeo around these readings, but I must confess this one caught me a little off guard.

“... repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be **proclaimed.**”

PROCLAIM REPENTANCE!!!

The word proclaim means to announce, or to declare – to make happen. For example, the Emancipation Proclamation was the announcement, the declaration that the slaves were emancipated, made free. The proclamation made it so.

So how does one proclaim repentance?

**I'm confused!?**

And there is this line from the Book of Acts I saw when researching the word repentance...

“God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might **give repentance** to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

Say what??? Repentance is a GIFT or something to be PROCLAIMED???

And somehow, it is intimately connected to forgiveness. A connection, I'm beginning to believe, we have totally backwards – if these passages are true.

So like I said, “I'm confused.”

Because as I think back to all those people yelling at me on a street corner... OK, maybe not all of them – some were yelling at me because of how I drive... But when I think back to all those people on the street corner yelling at me to “REPENT” ... I don't recall hearing it as being offered as a gift or a proclamation.

A command... a demand... an imperative... Yes! But a gift? NO!!!

And it was a command, a demand, an imperative that I had to do. Let's get back to that old subject, verb, object thing. When it came to repentance, I always thought I was the subject, my activity was the verb, and God or my sorrowful feelings or actions were the object.

But if repentance is a gift or something to be proclaimed over me, then God is the subject, God's activity is the verb, and I am the object.

And now I think I have to repent for how I have always understood repentance... or do I?

The word repentance literally means to change one's mind, to be turned around in one's way of thinking, or to take on a new way of thinking. To put it into contemporary language: to receive "a wake-up call" or to undergo a "paradigm shift."

And Jesus says this is what has happened in his life, death, and resurrection. Which is kind of interesting if you think about it. Because I thought the whole point of this thing was to get me to some future 'afterlife.' You know, get me 'saved.'

But according to Jesus, the point of all this is that you and I might 'wake up' to a new way of living... be given a new 'paradigm,' a new 'lens' through which to see the world, and *LIVE IN THE WORLD*.

The resurrection isn't just a gift to those who have died, but to those who are still living.

Apparently, Jesus died on the cross to change our view of God and life, not to change God's stance towards us and our afterlife...

...and that old substitutionary theory of atonement keeps taking on more water...

We think the connection between repentance and forgiveness is that repentance leads to forgiveness. If you repent, God will forgive you.

But that is not the case.

**It is the proclamation of forgiveness that leads to repentance,  
not repenting that leads to forgiveness.**

Luther has this great comment on why Adam and Eve hide in the garden of Eden after sinning against God. He says they hide because they don't know what kind of God they have. They don't know if God is a forgiving God or a vengeful S-O-B. And so they hide, living in fear because they don't know.

I dare say, that is how many Christians live – in fear and dread of God. And if they don't live in fear and dread, they certainly tell others they should be living in fear and dread of God.

Apparently fear sells, both in politics and religion.

Hence, the street corner preachers crying out for others to repent, or else!

But here's the thing. We don't need to run and hide like Adam and Eve. We don't need to live in fear and dread. We know what kind of God we have. We know whether God, at God's core, is forgiving or vengeful.

We've heard it proclaimed from the cross. We've heard it proclaimed over us. We've heard it proclaimed to us.

And it is this proclamation that can shepherd us beyond our fears, from death into life.

It is this proclamation that can repent us from death into life.

**Forgiveness is the bottom-line reality of the Mystery's kingdom.**

And restoration or repentance (they are the same thing) is the goal, not retribution.

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not repenting that leads to forgiveness.**

I love the way Eugene Peterson puts it in "The Message":

*"You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers,  
rises from the dead on the third day, and then*

***a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed..."***

This is the new reality under which we live. A new reality, not just in the future or afterlife, but in the here and now.

This is the new paradigm; this is the new mindset; this is what we are given a 'wake-up call' to.

A mind awakened by, changed by, turned around by ... FORGIVENESS.

**Forgiveness is the bottom-line reality – the bottom-line proclamation – in the Mystery's kingdom.** And restoration or repentance is the goal, not retribution.

But this is so different from the ways of the world. The world lives by 'if..., then...'. The world lives by reward and punishment. It is threats of punishment that lead to a changed life, not forgiveness.

The world believes that the best response to sin and brokenness is to yell, "STOP IT OR ELSE!"

But if yelling 'stop it or else' worked, Jesus could have just as well stayed up in heaven, because there are more than enough religious leaders and people on street corners doing that kind of yelling – and there always have been.

But for some reason God didn't work that way. God raised the one who suffered and died.

The one who was anything but a religious leader screaming, "STOP IT!"

This one who not only finds grace for those who break the law, but says, "I was in prison and you visited me."

This one who touches lepers and not only speaks to women, but appears to them first on Easter.

This one whose final proclamation over us is, "Father, forgive them."

Perhaps it has to be the one whom we crucified – the one whose life didn't matter to us – whom we decided needed to be punished and not rewarded.

Perhaps it can only be this one who can 'wake us up,' 'change our reality,' 'shift our paradigm.'

Only the one who has forgiven us can move us to live in forgiveness.

Only this one can turn us around to a new paradigm of life – a repentant life.

I want to share with you a quote from a guy named Steven Daugherty about this proclamation or gift of repentance and this kingdom of forgiveness:

***“There is, according to Jesus, a Kingdom in our midst that’s over and under and permeating whatever temporal empire or nation or kingdom we may be standing in. Right here, at hand. It’s not confined to geography or a yet-to-be-experienced afterlife. It’s the state of things as they are supposed to be... It’s the difference between a nun wielding a ruler and the Christ handing me coffee at my bedside, asking if I’m ready, after all these years, to get out of my bed and live. When we realize demands aren’t held over us, then we have a better chance of resisting the urge to hold it over others. As it comes from peace to make peace, repentance is the lifelong process of learning to see goodness, not cease badness. The gift of sight by a Father who doesn’t slap hands, but washes sleepy eyes.”***

And so, this ‘repentance,’ this ‘changed mind’ thing must be a gift, proclaimed to one like me whose sleepy eyes and mind are so often closed – shut tight.

I suppose it’s why I so often return to this meal, where the closed-minded betrayer and the closed-minded denier were given the gift of a new way of thinking and seeing, and a new way of living, where forgiveness was proclaimed over them.

**They were given the Mystery’s kingdom, where forgiveness is the bottom-line reality.** And restoration or repentance is the goal, not retribution.

Yeah, I suppose that’s why I so often return to this meal, in the hopes that I too will be given the gift of repentance (a new mind) and a bottom line of forgiveness.

Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go give a gift to a guy yelling on a street corner.

**Amen.**

# *Spirit in the Desert*

## *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 this place.

Your presence fills it.

Your presence is peace.

2) ...my heart, 3) ...my mind, 4) ...my life

## **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

## *Shepherd Me, O God*

(Marty Haugen)

Refrain: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

- 1 God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want, I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,  
I walk by the quiet waters of peace. [Refrain]
- 2 Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul, you lead me by pathways of righteousness and  
truth, my spirit shall sing the music of your name. [Refrain]
- 3 Though I should wander the valley of death, I fear no evil, for you are at my side,  
your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope. [Refrain]
- 4 You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred, crowning me with love beyond my  
power to hold. [Refrain]
- 5 Surely your kindness and mercy follow me all the days of my life;  
I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore. [Refrain]

## **The Meal**

### *The Lord's Prayer*

(Taize Reflections)

## **Benediction**

### *May God Keep and Bless You*

(Marty Haugen)

May God keep and bless you, and nothing distress you. May God guard and guide you and friends walk beside you. May God's arms surround you and fear not confound you. May God's light shine through you and night not subdue you. As you sleep and wake may your prayers arise as love songs for God, whose love never dies, whose love never dies.