



Dispossessed – Touchpoint for August 31, 2022

Luke 14:25-33 (NRSVUE) ²⁵ Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.

TOUCH POINT ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.

³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

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

“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple.”

It’s a good thing I’m a Christian, and not a Biblican. And by that, I mean I am someone who seeks to follow the Christ and not a book. Someone who worships a living entity and not ink on a page. Someone who can look beyond the literal.

Because if there is one thing I’ve learned in my 66 years... there’s much more to words than their literal meaning. My former marriage taught me that:

Me: “How are you?”

Her: “Fine.”

Me: “Good, because for a moment there, I thought you were upset.”

It’s a good thing I’m a Christian, and not a Biblican. Otherwise, I would have a problem between this and Jesus saying there are two great commandments, “Love the Lord your God. And love your neighbor.”

But even in saying that, it doesn’t take the sting away from these words, and in one respect I think it only makes them worse.

Some random thoughts on individual verses, here at the beginning... before I prove I have no cohesive thoughts on everything at the end:

“None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.”

- Possession is 9/10ths of the LAW! But the Mystery is 10/10ths GIFT/GRACE. Anyone see a conflict here? Possessions – law. Mystery – GIFT/GRACE.

Now on an interesting side note... I've never met a biblical literalist – a biblican – who used this verse as the primary criteria for calling oneself a disciple of Jesus. Never met one. They all seemed to still have possessions, and some were mighty proud of them all. I guess they do believe in historical context and metaphor after all.

“Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes at him with twenty thousand?”

- You wanna wage war against the Mystery, you better consider the cost.
- You wanna hold out for free will, tell me about it when you're dead and buried in the grave.
- You want God to be your co-pilot, you better remember who created the weather you're flying through.

And this great bumper sticker, "Jesus died so you can have a choice." Well guess what, "You're going to die so you can no longer have a choice." And then God can finally have God's way with you.

“... What king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes at him with twenty thousand?”

- Don't try to counter Mystery's grace with your free will – it's a losing battle.

“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple.”

- Somehow, I don't think Jesus would make it as a 'family values' candidate.

And this quote from Saul Steinberg, which I think gets at what Jesus is trying to say:

“I think it is very important for people to run away... from home, from the mainstream, from their family, from their culture, from the society that produced them... because the moment I have to learn something new, like new habits, new languages, I myself have something like a re-birth.”

Now some random thoughts on the totality:

Jesus is speaking about all the things we HOLD dear. Family, what we've built with our lives, our towers and kingdoms, Life itself.

All the things we HOLD dear. And maybe that's the point and the problem. We HOLD them.

The problem isn't in the noun, but the verb.

The problem isn't my family... oh wait, have you met my family? They're the cause of all my problems. But we don't have enough time for THAT Touchpoint.

Anyway, getting back to the Touchpoint at hand. The problem isn't the noun, but the verb. The problem with all the things we HOLD dear is that we think we HOLD them. We think we possess them. We think they are ours to keep. We think the things we've built belong all and only to us.

Howard Schultz, owner of Starbucks, likes to call himself a self-made billionaire. Which I find curious, because he must have attended a different sex-ed class than I did growing up. I learned, in that class filled

with giggles and confounded silence, that NO ONE IS SELF-MADE. And that must have been something important to learn, because my parents had to sign a permission slip for me to learn that.

Think about that. Your parents had to sign a permission slip for you to learn that NO ONE IS SELF-MADE. Why is that such a dirty little secret? Is it because it's so subversive to our present-day culture?

Anyway, back to self-made billionaire Howard Schultz:

I seriously doubt he grows the coffee beans himself... harvests them himself... ships them himself... grinds them himself... builds the water filtration system that purifies the water that seeps over them himself. Or that he created the economy and cultural mindset that thinks it's cool to pay \$10.00 for 50¢ worth of liquid.

And quite frankly, I've been in Starbucks more than a few times, and I don't think he has ever served me. Self-Made... PLEEEEEEZE.

Now the point I'm trying to make isn't about Howard Schultz. The only difference between him and you and me is degree. Well, that and a few billion dollars.

We keep wanting to bring our supposed possessions out and hold them up to God. "Look God, look at **my** free Will, **my** faith, **my** piety, **my** well-balanced family... just check out **my** Facebook page or read **my** Christmas letter. Look at **my** successful career. Look at all **I've** built." What we don't understand is that our attitude towards all those things is at war with the Divine. They aren't our possessions. They aren't our accomplishments. We are not Self-Made. And one can only hope God defeats us before we die, so that we can finally live.

The church is not immune to this, as well. A few years ago, I did church marketing for a financial services company. I attended many different kinds of churches. Those with all the smells and bells, incense and incantations. And those churches with none of that. Just singing and talking about how they felt about Jesus.

But in many of them there was still an emptiness. And here is what I realized: Many churches fall into two categories – those who worship **their** worship, and those who put faith in **their** faith.

They are both celebrating what they hold dear – their religious practices or their belief systems. But it wasn't the Mystery that was being celebrated. It was what they held most dear – their acts or their beliefs.

Now I must say, in those churches where the Divine was the focus, it didn't matter whether it was high church, or low church, or no church. When whatever they were doing put the focus on the Mystery, **IT WAS DIVINE.**

It's a conundrum I suppose. How do you **NOT HOLD ON** to what you hold most dear?

But then again, how do you give in order to receive? And how do you die in order to live?

I suppose only by hearing over and over again, "*It's all gift. It's all grace.*"

Now that I think about it, when Jesus asks us to give up all our possessions, he's really asking us to give up

nothing. He's only asking us to give up what was never ours to begin with. And that is our ongoing battle, our ongoing war with God.

What we don't understand is that our attitude towards all these things is at war with the Divine. They aren't our possessions. They aren't our accomplishments. We are not Self-Made. And one can only hope God defeats us before we die, so that we can finally live.

So maybe we should go to war with God. Maybe that is our only hope!

So go to war with God, please do. Because your petty army of possessions will never measure up to Mystery's grace. So go to war with God, please do. Because then, God can finally have God's way with you. Like God did in pronouncing forgiveness, once and for all, when we thought we had defeated Him on the cross.

Deny God by focusing on your own faith. Betray God by pointing to your own piety. Run away from God by remembering your own accomplishments. Please, do it now. So when you finally get so tired of running and fighting, God can defeat you before you die... so that you can live.

So that when you're finally ready to make peace, God can sit you down and feed you. Each and every day, in each and every way. Through family and friends. Work and recreation. Study and experience. All as a gift rather than a possession.

Each and every day, in each and every way, the Christ can feed you... giving you His very self.

Like here in this simple meal of bread and drink.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)

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)

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.