



**TOUCH POINT**

## **The King of Hearts – Touchpoint for February 14, 2024**

### **Mark 1:9-15 (NRSVUE) The Baptism and Testing of Jesus**

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

<sup>12</sup> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

### **The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

### **The Guest House by Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi**

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

### **Grace and Peace to you from the mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.**

What does it mean to welcome these feelings and entertain them? That's the last thing I want to do when unpleasant feelings ravage my mind. What's the alternative, dwell on them till they leave? Been there, and it's exhausting. Read books, repeat religious quotes, and listen to platitudes? Irritating. Jesus must have had these feelings in the wilderness.

Mark says Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness of his inner world. I'm not comfortable with the idea that Spirit would lead Jesus into the wilderness of temptation, but I'm open. Perhaps it's better than being led

by the devil into a meadow. Maybe Jesus welcomed the challenge. I sincerely doubt it. I mean, after all, it says he was tempted. Was he tempted to accept the offer of possessions and popularity or was he tempted to do whatever it took to get rid of his hunger, thirst, and feelings of anguish and loneliness? Did he really want to be a King like Caesar?

Jesus already had his identity moment. He experienced God in the Jordan. He gave himself to John to be baptized and God gave himself to Jesus as he was, willingly immersed in his identity. He didn't need this offering from the kingdoms of the world. He had the place of God's Son, and he was all in! But he did have a battle of the psyche. After fasting, he was weakened and vulnerable. It doesn't get any more human than this. Jesus needed to know his identity going into the wilderness. Having heard a voice from the sky is a pretty solid sign. The battle was in the psyche.

Here is what Psychoanalyst Carl Jung says about the Temptation of Jesus.

The story of the temptation clearly reveals the nature of the psychic power with which Jesus came into collision. It was the power intoxicated devil of the prevailing Caesar that led him into dire temptation in the wilderness. This devil was the objective psyche that held all the peoples of the Roman Empire under its sway and that is why it promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth, as if it were trying to make a Caesar of him. Obeying the inner call of his vocation, Jesus voluntarily exposed himself to the assaults of the imperialistic madness that filled everyone, conqueror and conquered alike. In this way, he recognized the nature of the objective psyche which had plunged the whole world into misery and had begotten a yearning for salvation that found expression even in the Pagan poets. Far from suppressing or allowing himself to be suppressed by this psychic onslaught, he lets it act on him consciously and assimilated it, thus the world conquering Caesarianism transformed into spiritual kingship and the Roman Empire into the universal Kingdom of God that was not of this world.

– Carl Jung, *The Development of the Personality*

Could it be that by embracing all the negative feelings that come into our guest house, the feelings become nothing more than hovering clouds? When doing battle with them, clouds become a storm. Jesus relied on truth, not feelings. Truth took place in the Jordan... it was his moment of identity, a moment of clarity that led to his immersive surrender to a power greater than himself. Jesus had given himself to a journey of uncertainty, fueled by a light that was previously revealed to him in the Jordan. In the wilderness a new kingdom, not of this world, is birthed.

Caesar's sway still permeates our political landscape, but we have our individual wilderness battles. Like in the wilderness, the oppositional voices come. They taunt our identity, and they are not too mysterious. In our western culture there has always been a high price paid for outward strength and discipline. It seems the only time we detach from our valuables and devices are when we are at the gym, getting physically fit. When do we detach to prepare for the internal battles we will face? The gym is low hanging fruit. What about the workplace, our social status, and our net worth? We are still surrounded by the kingdoms of this world, making a play for our psyche.

Rumi and Carl Jung seem to be saying that these feelings are an invitation to see where real power resides. Once we have surrendered to the irrevocable truth of our belonging and our condition of powerlessness as Jesus did in the Jordan, we have access to *synergeo*. *Synergeo* in Greek means the *God who causes* all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28). This is no platitude! The Bible doesn't say all things happen for a reason. It says stuff happens, but post-event, God causes all things to work together for good. *Synergeo* is co-laborers working together and producing perseverance. But it is not willpower! It is my willingness and God's power. It is something we have access to when we let go of good feelings as prerequisites. Its good purpose is to establish the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the heart where only God is King.

In a religious sense, perhaps the most destructive thing we can do to battle internal and external voices of the kingdoms is to sacrifice something to receive God's favor. By embracing the feelings for what they are, perhaps we can see their power as an illusion.

Remember when, for positive thinking, we were supposed to state and repeat the promises of God? Well, here's one of the promises that was never included in the bunch. Jesus said, "In this world there will be trouble." (John 16:33) You'll never see this promise as a magnet on a refrigerator. I get the feeling Jesus' time in the wilderness was not far from his mind when he said this. Indeed, there is trouble in our outer and inner worlds.

Jesus did not bargain in the wilderness. Jesus did not regroup to see the benefits of heading up both worldly kingdoms and a heavenly kingdom. He relied on the spirit of truth. A power greater than himself. Jesus did not make a sacrifice to get God's help. He spoke the truth already given to him in the Jordan.

This Lenten season, perhaps we can remember what the Bible says in Hosea 6:6:

- "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."  
(NRSVUE)
- "I'm after love that lasts, not more religion. I want you to know God, not go to more prayer meetings."  
(The Message)

In the good times and in the bad, we come to the table set before us to commune and remember we are made strong in our brokenness. A table set for us even in the presence of our enemies. Remembering our shared and declared identity. You are my son, my daughter, my beloved, in whom I am extremely pleased.

**Amen**

## Opening Songs

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

### **Create in Me**

(The Concordia Choir)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence and take not the Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.

## Bible Passage

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

## Touchpoint

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

### **See Him**

(Keith Duke)

**See him...** 1) Silent and lifeless 2) Alone and forlorn  
3) Broken and helpless... crowned with a garland of thorns  
4) As son and as brother 5) Related to all  
6) Through the grief of a mother... hurting the most of all  
7) As healer and teacher 8) As helper and friend  
9) As prophet and preacher... Ignore Him? I doubt if you can.

## The Meal

### **The Lord's Prayer**

("Our Father," Taizé 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.

Amen.