



TOUCH POINT

Physics, Bro! – Touchpoint for February 21, 2024

Mark 8:31-38 (NRSVUE) Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Greetings to you in the name of the mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

“Mere credal or civil religion does not give us access to the rich and revelatory world of Spirit. In fact, it blocks the journey into grief, into the Mystery, into the Paradox, into ecstasy, into Universal Compassion, into the Universal Christ.” – *Richard Rohr, about the differences we cling to and the unity we refuse*

Let’s be adults here. We are to come to God as children, but we are to be adults in the world! So, I ask, should we take it literally that Jesus believed Peter was Satan?

Peter wanted to be the adult. He wanted to block the process of the natural spiritual flow of Jesus’ life. He was attempting to control the outcomes. As tempting as it is to put forth a more palatable reason for Jesus calling Peter, Satan, maybe we shouldn’t reframe it. Many might say, “Oh, Jesus just *felt* like Peter was acting like the devil right then. Peter thought he was the Messiah’s messiah. Jesus was just trying to get his attention!” Let’s pick this scripture apart until it doesn’t sound judgmental. Peter was a holy man because of his intentions so really, he was giving Jesus the opportunity to say something memorable for us to read 2,000 years later. God is good!

No! How about we take it on face value, o ye Bible literalists. Jesus called Peter “Satan.” Now who’s uncomfortable with its literal implication?

Is Peter Satan? Jesus said, “Get thee behind me!” What does this imply? Satan was in front of him. Satan stands before the natural flow of spiritual growth and transformation... in the way of life, death, ascension, and resurrection. Whatever Satan is, it most certainly attempts to impede real life with an invitation to avoid suffering, sidestep death, and live a fearfully self-conscious life.

When my son and I used to play ping pong on our dining room table (don’t judge), we sometimes argued whether the ball hit the molding on the side of the table. We would re-enact the ball’s trajectory when it hit as proof. We had a thing we would say to support our opinion. “Physics, bro!” Now we say it for other things, to make each other laugh.

We don't have to do a lot to make life process take place. Change happens. Physics, bro! Life happens! Physics, bro! There are no steps for a river to flow. It does not need our help. But we can dam, divert, diminish, and destroy the rivers flow. Physics, bro!

Why else would Western Christianity take so long to remove Eastern practices from the book of cults? Anything that does not state humankind and particularly, Christians, are superior, is the devil. We pray for intervention and to avoid calamity. We pray to *acquire* the fruit of the spirit, instead of *living into* the fruit. We do not embrace a beginner's mind of humility.

Let's look at an embellished version of the Jesus/Peter dialogue.

"Turn your Bibles to Matthew 16:13-20 in the Henry translation with commentary" (said in the voice of J. Vernon McGee).

Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter blurts, "You are the Messiah..."

*¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock (*that you Peter, are not the messiah*) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven (*which is at hand right now*); whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (*it's all in the eternal now*).²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (*Perhaps, it's like Peter having the keys to a Maserati, but he doesn't own it. So please fellas, don't tell others that Peter owns it!*)*

Dad can take those keys back in a heartbeat! And if you don't have the keys?

Well... physics, bro!

This divine interaction between soul, spirit and body in heaven and earth and earth and heaven is so crystal clear in Jesus words. What Jesus called *The Way* is what Catholics refer to as the *Pascal Mystery*. Life, Death, Ascension, Resurrection. It takes place both in macro and in micro. In one daily event we can experience a pull towards the ego against the natural flow. We must die to our ego, to ascend and resurrect.

Just like Peter, we at times intervene in other people's business in our attempts to control the outcomes. Sometimes life tells us, "Physics, bro!" with harsh reality.

I had the keys to my daughter's heart. There is nothing better than to be loved and admired by your children and their friends. To be trusted. That trust can be threatened in one attempt to impede the natural lessons of life. I can think of a few dramatic examples with my daughters, but it's too painful, so I'll share one from my library of "when dad lost his keys."

I was very involved with my kids' lives. I started a youth group in my home that combined three different churches who were struggling with maintaining their youth groups. It really caught fire. So, I knew a lot of the people that my daughters, in particular, hung out with. Guys and girls. I'm not sure how old my daughter Andi was at the time, perhaps around 6th grade. She was going to a youth retreat that involved a lot of the kids that I too, knew. One of the boys I'll call Bobby for this story, lest I lose my keys again. I picked Andi up from school and she took the front seat in the car. Also in the back seat was Julie, my intern from Grand Canyon. Since my

office was at my home, my interns were like family members. Julie had a great affection for the girls and with it came her opinions, which I respected greatly.

Andi began a conversation saying, "I have a question, Dad. I'm trying to decide if I should go out with Bobby or not." My first thought was, 'Go out? You're only in 6th grade, absolutely not!' But then I had to stop for a second and think, okay, what did going out mean in my day? It meant it's a date. Now it means loosely boyfriend and girlfriend. She wanted to know if she should go out with Bobby, knowing the weekend youth retreat was coming up. She didn't know how it would affect everything.

Well, this did dad knew. More than that I wanted to protect her from potential heartache, conflict and all the things that happen at a young age that I didn't want to see happen. At the time, all I was thinking was 'I need to stop this. I'll use my best wisdom voice as a cover.' I began telling Andi what would happen. "You'll start to go out, you'll become an item, and you will find yourselves doing things separately from the group. There might be some jealousy, there might be conflict between you and Bobby, people will take sides, there'll have to be a giant group meeting to problem solve, and there will be a lot of tears. You might hug and make up and then you'll come home."

I felt very proud of the fact that I know how these things work. It got quiet and Andi just stared into the air before saying sadly, "Okay, Dad." We parked in front of the house. Andi got out of the car, and I could feel a pair of eyes staring at me. I was right. I could see them filling the rear-view mirror from the back seat. Defensively said to Julie, "What?" She said nothing. I said, "What did I do wrong?" "Oh, you didn't do anything wrong, everything you said was right on," she responded. I said, "So why if I was right, am I feeling so wrong right now?" Julie responded, "Ooh, what you said was very accurate regarding how things happen. You did a really good job! Now she doesn't even have to live it. You've already lived it for her."

Julie was fired.

Seriously though, when we attempt to impede the journey of another person, we are interfering in the intimacy with their God that develops in the good times and in the bad times. Sometimes the best thing we can do is accompany them in their journey. I lived Andi's life for her in order to control the outcomes. Isn't that what Peter did?

Now, if Andi would have said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!," we would have had another conversation. I think Julie took care of that part.

No matter what we do to control other people's actions, perceptions, or outcomes, even if it is well meaning, what is lost is that person's intimacy, not only between us and them, but between them and God.

As Ken Blanchard once said, "It is not okay to do God's work, using Satan's ways."

We need to get out of the way sometimes to allow others to be in *The Way*. And what is *The Way*. It is life, death, ascension, and resurrection. The glorious life on earth in spirit. That part of Peter needed to be called out. I believe Jesus's calling out was severely compassionate. He was not concerned about Peter's feelings. He cared about what was enticing Peter to take control and prevent the difficult journey and suffering essential for resurrection. Perhaps Peter feared if this happened to Jesus, they would all be shamed, mocked, and disbelieved. Peter did not want this to happen and wanted Jesus to stop accepting this fate. Jesus said, "Spiritual physics, bro!"

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.