



Hidden Things – Touchpoint for June 12, 2024

TOUCH POINT

Psalm 20 (NRSVUE) Prayer for Victory, a Psalm of David

¹ The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

The name of the God of Jacob protect you!

² May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion.

³ May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. *Selah*

⁴ May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans.

⁵ May we shout for joy over your victory and in the name of our God set up our banners.

May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

⁶ Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand.

⁷ Some take pride in chariots and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God.

⁸ They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright.

⁹ Give victory to the king, O LORD; answer us when we call.

Mark 4:26-34 (NRSVUE) The Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

The Use of Parables

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

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

In my effort to understand the parable of the mustard seed being like the kingdom of God, I found a sticky place. The author says Jesus explained the meaning to the disciples in private. In private? These explanations were not preserved for us! How are we supposed to live a righteous life if we weren't given the meanings? Oops, they didn't write them down?? If the private meanings were indeed written down, you mean they weren't preserved in story or in memoriam for the church? These supposed inerrant words of God are incomplete? The God who gave us the Bible in book and movie form, conspired with human clergy to determine the contents of the Bible, give the okay to omit vital meanings? The God they created in their academic and political minds could not come up with meanings, or at least make something up, the way dogma was? By creatively declaring the Bible's ultimate authority in all matters, and shunning those with

uncomfortable questions, the mystics were vaporized. Those who would seek deep listening rather than superficial expectations were no longer valued.

Don't get me wrong. Much of the language used was for the Christ-seeking individual. For example, we've said, 'to be a Christian is not religious, it's about a relationship.' Riiight.

Perhaps parable meanings were kept private intentionally, so we wouldn't legislate our created meanings as dogma. Instead, we would have to create a private relationship with the parables. Thereby formulating the very questions which lead a seeker into relationship. Maybe coming up with a public declaration of meaning on these parables steers us to the transactional religion of evangelical Christianity.

I think it might all begin with how we, in our theological discussions, view the Bible. Do we begin with a common view of the Bible? If not, we will head down a road of misunderstanding and potential debate.

Is the Bible perfect? If yes, then has it become the evangelical pope that resides in evangelical Vaticans... Bible jurisdictions if you will, referenced by statements of faith?

I can't help but take pause when I read the statements of faith from the largest and most influential churches and denominations in Phoenix, Arizona alone. They will remain nameless. This not intended to bash. It is simply what has caused my questions to emerge about belonging. I love and embrace the people who attend for purposes of children's programs, vibrant worship, ecclesiastical comfort, duty, or passion and devotion to Christ. As a spiritual director it is not mine to determine or chastise the directions churches go in their basic assumptions. But it is mine to walk alongside many who have questions and seek those hidden meanings that have not yet transformed into brave words.

"We believe in the Scripture of the Old and New Testament as being verbally and completely inerrant in the original writings and of supreme and final authority in faith and life."

"Our foundation is based firmly upon the Bible as our ultimate authority on Christian beliefs and a guide to living."

"The Bible is divinely inspired by God, without error, given to man so that we may know and understand the truth of God and his love."

"The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct."

The ELCA states the following about Bible: *"This church accepts the canonical scriptures of the Old and New testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life."*

The Rev. Jay Thorson wrote this: *"I was reclaiming the view that the Bible isn't an inerrant vessel holding the treasure of the saving gospel message. That's what most ELCA professors and pastors teach, and I realized that was where I belonged. To those who say, 'But you don't believe in the Bible?' No, I don't. As our former presiding bishop, Mark Hanson, once said, 'I don't believe in the Bible - I believe in the God revealed in the Bible. The Bible is NOT inerrant. It contains clear contradictions in places (e.g. 2 creation stories in Gen. 1-3 that do not agree), and it has been open to interpretation from the beginning."*

This brings me back to the practice of information being hidden, private. When I was at a retreat with my spiritual direction cohorts at Still Point, we would listen to a song called *Mystery (Hidden Things)*:

*And I know the future is still unseen
The depths of Your wisdom no mind conceived
But I find my footing in mystery
The hidden things what's yet to be
Revealed in me*

*Oh, the beauty of the Father's word
Oh, the destiny in Him confirmed
Oh, the strength within my Savior's hands
That I would walk in what You've promised*

*And I know the future is still unseen
The depths of Your wisdom no mind conceived
But I find my footing in mystery
The hidden things what's yet to be
Revealed in me*

To this day I find this as one of my happy places. The words find me and help me leave the restless world and mind, a place where I can hear, in private, meanings to life's parables.

With an unconditional open-heartedness and non-judgmental mind, we can find our bodies in the place called home where questions can be asked, doubts can be had... where emotional belts and bras can fling, and we can fall backwards into the secret place where Jesus told us to pray. Perhaps we will see the hidden things that the disciples were told, not with our listening and distraught minds, but as a mystic. Love's mystic.

Amen.

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

You, Lord, Are in This Place

(Keith Duke)

You, Lord, are in 1)...this place. 2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.
Your presence fills it. Your presence is peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

In the Arms of God

(Tony Alonso, Marty Haugen, Michael Joncas)

Refrain: Come and rest in the arms of God. Leave your worry and fear.

Make your home in the heart of God. God will dry every tear.

For the burden you carry will fade within God's care. Come and rest in the arms of God.

1) Gentle is God's way and humble is God's heart. God's love will light the way that leads to peace. Surely you shall see God's goodness and God's grace. Rest now in God's embrace.

Refrain

2) Do not be afraid. God heals the broken heart. Through grief and disbelief God still remains.

God and God alone will be your soul's true rest. Fall in the arms of God. *Refrain*

3) You are not alone, for God is always near. Come place your doubt and fear within God's care.

God will give you rest, and soothe your weary soul. Dwell in the heart of God. *Refrain*

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

Benediction

Sevenfold Amen

(The Emmanuel Quartet)