



TOUCH POINT

Tattle Tails and Stumbling Blocks – Touchpoint for September 25, 2024

Mark 9:38-50Ta (NRSVUE) Another Exorcist

³⁸ John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name,^[a] and we tried to stop him because he was not following us.” ³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

Temptations to Sin

⁴² “If any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me^[a] to sin,^[a] it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to sin,^[a] cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell,^[a] to the unquenchable fire.^[a] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin,^[a] cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.^[a] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin,^[a] tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,^[a] ⁴⁸ where their worm never dies and the fire is never quenched. [Read full chapter](#)

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

My Lord, how violent! The cutting off appendages, gouging of eyes, tossing folk into the sea with an anchor around their neck. It sounds out of character for a peace-loving healer of a man like Jesus.

I suppose we could say Jesus feels very strong when others are led the wrong way, so perhaps he was using shocking images to convey his point to his intimate friends.

The disciples told Jesus, others are doing powerful deeds and yet are not part of us.

They were tattle-tailing.

We might say, “*Jesus, should we send a cease-and-desist letter?*” That’s the adult version of tattling. Here’s the toddler version. “*Jesus, they’re copying us!*” In Spanish, Jesus might have said, “*dejarlos!*” Leave them alone! If they aren’t against us, they are for us.

What was really bothering them?

What were they afraid of when they saw others doing things apart from them and not invoking the name of Jesus? Could this have been more about their ego, superiority, specialness, or branding? Notice they didn’t say they aren’t following you, Jesus. They said they aren’t following Us. That’s tribal thinking.

Jesus said, “...for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.”

Look carefully! Is Jesus saying it is better to bear the name of Christ?

That whoever does something powerful in my name is bearing the name of Christ. That this is doing something in the name of Jesus? The Christ who brought all things into existence.

Is Jesus saying it is better to bear the name of Christ?

“for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.” He said, “in my name.” In my name is another way of speaking of our residence. All things in Christ embodied in the person of Jesus as the way.

“whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.”

That whoever does something powerful in my name is bearing the name of Christ. That this is indeed doing something in Christ? The Christ who brought all things into existence. Jesus was time born; Christ is for all time and in all things.

We often close our prayers with “in Jesus’ name” or “in the name of Jesus” when we want something blessed. What does that even mean? Seriously, what might this mean? The consequences for doing something in the name of Jesus would be severe. As severe if we were to do harm to another on behalf of someone else.

Then Jesus added, and don’t be a stumbling block to others.

That interpretation of these scriptures stuck with me for a long time. But there had to be a much bigger reason for Jesus’ violent hyperbolic consequences for being a stumbling block..

What comes to mind for me is my mom’s instructions when I would leave to go out with my friends. “Mijo,” she’d say, “don’t be a stumbling block to others.” In other words, don’t do anything to give God a bad name. Don’t be a bad witness.

In my work with families over the years, I’ve found that there are two types of parents. Parents who do parenting well, according to the book, and parents who make mistakes at every turn. The funny thing is neither of these parenting styles appear to determine the outcome of their children’s “good” citizenship or mental health. It’s more about the relationship, whether it is built on love and humility from the parents. What arises as most important in the family, the rules or the people? They are little ones, as Jesus says. Vulnerable to our words and expectations. It’s not about all we say. It’s about knowing our identity. Not our title, last name, or tribe; it’s about these three words in the name, not *with* the name.

Jesus surely isn’t saying don’t tarnish my name. He must be saying that whenever you give a drink to someone, quench their thirst, and bring them life, you bear the name of Christ. Not the name of Jesus of Nazareth, born of flesh, but of the residence you take as part of the body of Christ.

You belong as part of the body of Christ in this incredible world. Whether black or white, left, right, or independent. Could this mean whether Muslim, Jew, Christian, or non, when one does something to ease human suffering and encourages agapao, welcoming love, they are bearing the name in Christ. They are part of the body.

But why would Jesus instruct you to cut off whatever causes you to stumble? Jesus’ words are not to warn those who cause others to stumble alone but to take action to remove what causes the tribal nature of their and our language.

Maybe "in the name of" does not mean I represent the Christian faith or that I am summoning the authority given to me by Jesus, our great leader. Nor is it a salute to Jesus and the mark of the end of a prayer. It seems Jesus is saying to have an attitude of humility, an understanding that we all reside in Christ as the body, and caring for one another is what the body does.

If you are growing in Christ as a beginner, which we all are, and someone inserts an obstacle, a stumbling block to your freedom in Christ to love, heal, see, hear, and develop intimacy with the mystery. Cut them loose.

Don't let them define your identity. The only identity God can give you. All are called, not just the disciples.

It appears Jesus is not saying, "Hey, be a good witness when you go to the movies." He is saying that if someone places religious obstacles to belonging, it's not just blasphemous; it would be better to have a millstone tied around their neck and tossed in the sea.

A millstone is a grain grinder with two incredibly heavy stone wheels. One wheel lies parallel to the ground, holding the grain, and the other heavier wheel rolls over the grain, crushing what is beneath it.

An ass drives the moving wheel. In short, don't be led by an ass, and don't be an ass in how you lead others!

Don't be an obstacle to those who come crawling to faith, hope, love, and grace. The greatest of those is love—the Christ. For us to bear the name of Christ, we remove obstacles and make the path smoother, not rougher.

Perhaps there are others who are on a trail, on the other side of a mountain, who see vistas we do not. Their journey is in the name of the Christ. They are empowered by being part of the body. They bear the name of Christ. They reside in Christ, aware or unaware. We will know them at the top or maybe cross paths on The Way. But don't pull them to your path or tell them their path is wrong. Please don't leave your path along the way to make your vista their vista. Don't place stones in their way and more burdens on their journey.

Jesus said that by doing these powerful deeds, they bear the power and name of Christ.

Richard Rohr says, "...it seems we so fell in love with this personal interface in Jesus that we forgot about the eternal Christ, the Body of God, which is all of creation.

When we believe in Jesus Christ, we believe in something much bigger than the historical incarnation we call Jesus. Jesus is the visible map. The entire sweep of the meaning of the Anointed One, the Christ, includes us and includes all of creation since the beginning of time."

May we be *in* 'The Way' and not in the way.

Amen

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

Calm Me, Lord

(Margaret Rizza)

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm. Still me Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease. Enfold me Lord, in your peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Healer of Our Every Ill

(Marty Haugen)

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow.
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.
You who know our fears and sadness. Grace us with your peace and gladness.
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*
In the pain and joy beholding, how your grace is still unfolding
Give us all your vision God of love. *Refrain*

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Monastery Choir of St. John of San Francisco)

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.