



**TOUCH POINT**

## **Making Way for The Way – Touchpoint for December 4, 2024**

### **Luke 3:1-6 (NRSVUE) The Proclamation of John the Baptist**

<sup>1</sup>In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.

<sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
<sup>6</sup>and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

### **Proverbs 14:12-16 (NRSVUE)**

- <sup>12</sup>There is a way that seems right to a person,  
but its end is the way to death.
- <sup>13</sup>Even in laughter the heart is sad,  
and the end of joy is grief.
- <sup>14</sup>The perverse get what their ways deserve,  
and the good, what their deeds deserve.
- <sup>15</sup>The simple believe everything,  
but the clever consider their steps.
- <sup>16</sup>The wise are cautious and turn away from evil,  
but the fool throws off restraint and is careless.

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

When I was director of Christian Growth Services for Remuda Ranch Treatment Center I met with a twenty-something woman battling not only with her disordered eating, but also with parents frustrated at her irrational fear of weight gain. The daughter suffered with anorexia. Her anxiety rose just sitting at the dinner table. Her parents feared for her life and her battle became their obsession. “Why won’t you just eat?” they would ask her. Unable to explain what it feels like to be terrified by the sight of food, she would feel more misunderstood and alone.

It was Family Week, and she introduced me to her parents. That day I was invited to the ropes course where they would, as a family, experience the outdoor challenge. I watched as the daughter repeated the course she had experienced the week before with her therapist and peers. When she was done it was her mom's turn.

With helmet and gloves and some voices of encouragement, she began the climb to a small platform atop a 30-foot telephone pole. She covered her terror with a nervous laugh. Down below, her daughter was proudly cheering her to go on. “You got this mom; you can do it!” As she rose to the top, the small platform swayed

slightly, and she could not get herself to stand. As the time went by and the voices of reassurance from below grew louder, she stayed on all fours exclaiming, "My legs are shaking, I can't stand! I can't do it, I'm so scared!" Her daughter shouting support from below, "Just stand up, Mom!"

As time went by it became clear that her mom had become immobilized by fear. That's when her daughter yelled at the top of her lungs, "Mom! That's how I feel when I sit at the dinner table staring at a plate of food!"

The mom yelled back with tears, "I get it! I really do! Can I get down now?" We all shouted, "Yes!" As she tried to put a foot down on the top rung, the ropes course guide took over with instructions for the way down. He shouted, "Just let yourself go! Fall off, it will be a soft landing, I promise. I got you!"

With that, the mom had a way, the treatment team had a way, and the daughter had a way for her path to healing and transformation. None of which would get the desired outcome. All three ways are riddled with bias. Whether a bias created by one's own life experience, book knowledge or fears, we all have our way.

The kingdoms of this world are riddled with ways that make a job easier. Cooking hacks, communication hacks, technology hacks. Even spirituality hacks are at our fingertips with just the right app. No matter what your question or need, someone has an app for that.

It's okay to go about our way. In the marvelous evolutionary work of the development of human consciousness, we are the only species that observes our own behavior and talks about it. In our creativity, we develop these ways of being and accompanying apps. It's spectacular and it's a gift from the Creator.

But at some point, we must fire all the kings who have called the shots over our gifted, productive selves.

Perhaps this was the voice crying in the wilderness. John the Baptist went into all the regions dominated by rulers of ways, shouting for people to prepare for a new king and a way of peace, a new beginning.

John's cry for repentance was to prepare the way of the heart for a change in direction. To clear the way of old ways. He wasn't yelling the repentance that says "Hey everyone, stop sinning, Jesus is coming and boy is he pissed!", or "Just look busy!"

He said prepare the way for the real deal. The way beyond all ways. It's not a hack to make your life easier. It is a way of peace amid all the other hacks wanting to have their way. A compassionate voice crying in the wilderness of our hearts. A voice of anticipation. The voice that says create space for a new beginning.

I must sit and listen deeply to this voice that still cries out to me. I am not sure what that is for me at this moment. I don't know what the offering of new beginning is for you, either. But we can prepare for the way. The expectation of peace in the middle of competing ways. A relief from the disappointment of ways leading to dead end after dead end.

After this precious family completed the ropes course, I was asked by the therapist to join her and the family for a session. They had prepared their hearts for a new unknown course of treatment. What did they determine were the actions to take toward healing and change?

They stopped all the different courses they were on and cleared ways of communication with deep listening and compassion. Removing the stumbling stones of bias, off the path just enough to hear their daughter's cries for unconditional love and acceptance, the boulders of irrational fears and smoothing the potholes of

pride. They sat together and saw the face of hope and anticipated a new beginning. The way of peace.  
Creating space for it in expectation. Together.

The soil must be prepared for deep roots or trees will fall in heavy winds.

Proverbs 12:14-16

“There is a way that seems right unto humankind in the tender compassion of our God;  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**Amen**

## Opening Songs

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

### **Prepare the Way**

(Taizé)

Prepare the way of the Lord. And all the people will see the salvation of our God.

## Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

## Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

### **My Soul Proclaims**

(Marty Haugen)

My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my spirit rejoices in you.

- 1) My being proclaims the greatness of God. My spirit finds joy in my savior.  
For you regard me in my lowliness and every age shall call me blest.
- 2) Great and mighty are you, O holy One, strong is your kindness evermore.  
How you favor the weak and lowly ones. Humbling the proud of heart.
- 3) You have cast down the mighty from their thrones. Raising up those of low degree.  
You have filled the hungry with wondrous things and sent the rich empty away.

## The Meal

### **Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

## Benediction

### **Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel**

(Salt of the Sound)

O, Come, O, Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel.  
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.