



Some Things Just Need to be Said – TouchPoint for January 6, 2021

Mark 1:4-11 (NRSV) ⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed,

“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved with you I am well pleased.”

Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

It's a question of starting point. Where do you start in your journey of faith? What's the basis for it all?

John the Baptist and Jesus seem to have two different starting points. And we seem to like John's the best. John's starting point is about us doing something. It starts with us. “Repent, change, get your house in order.” “Clean up your act. Straighten up before God arrives on the scene.”

Oh, how we love John the Baptist. Especially, at this time of year when we make resolutions, commitments, and dedications. It makes us feel so in control. We also like John when we can use his words against other people. And we even like it for ourselves. “See how I've cleaned up. See how pure I am.” “Why can't you just be more like me.”

“You know, if you just behaved rightly, and believed rightly, you just might be allowed into the kingdom. You just might belong in the family of God. You just might be called a ‘beloved child’.”

Jesus' journey of faith, as recorded in Mark's gospel, is very different. It starts with a statement... a declaration... from the Divine.

“You are my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased.”

It is this declaration that impacts Jesus' behavior and beliefs. This knowledge of belonging, before anything else. As my friend Henry Rojas, constantly states, “It's not behave, believe, belong” ... that's John the Baptist. “It's belong, believe, behave” ... that's Jesus' way.

And that is why,

Some things just need to be said. Some things just need to be heard.

It isn't enough to just think a certain way about them. It isn't enough to just feel a certain way about them.

Some things just need to be said. Some things just need to be heard.

“This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

These are the words Jesus hears at the beginning of his ministry. At the beginning... not just in the middle...not just at the end.

At the beginning, before Jesus has done anything other than being a terrible two, a precocious teenager, and a twenty-something male.

At the beginning.

And it calls to mind some other beginnings where God issues words of grace and acceptance.

In the creation story, after each day of creating, God looks and sees that “It is good.” And after the last day of creating, when we were created, God sees that “It is very good.” And that's probably a good thing, because if God had waited a few more days, who knows what he might have said.

Or with Mary, when the angel greets her with words from God, it is “Hail Mary, full of grace.”

“Beloved Son, well pleased.” God saw that it was “Very good.” “Hail Mary, full of grace.”

God it seems, likes to make decisions about us before waiting to see how things will work out.

That's not how we normally think of God. We usually think of God as a judge, who makes his judgment at the end of our lives, at the end of time. We usually think of God as a judge who sits back and waits to issue his pronouncement on you and me after it is all over. But that is not the God of this text. That is not the God of the creation story. That is not the God who comes to Mary.

“Beloved child, well pleased.” “Very good.” “Hail Mary full of grace.”

These are the first words God speaks over us and our lives. And they bring us to life even as they cause us death. You see, once you've heard those words spoken over you, “Beloved child..., very good..., full of grace” ... Once you've heard those words, it is too late for promises to “do better.” Too late for 'getting myself together', too late for guilt to be of any use. Once you've heard those words, death has come to your striving to be right, and your goal to be judged worthy.

“Beloved child, well pleased.” “Very good.” “Hail Mary full of grace.”

But these words go so much against the grain of how our world works, and so much of what our faith believes.

And that is why,

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It's like this...You can listen to all the love songs you want. You can read all the love poetry you can find, but until someone says, "I love you", it is all a nice theory, a great conjecture, an entertaining thought. But once it is said to you, everything changes.

That is why those things we call sacraments, baptism and communion are so important. For they take what is a nice theory, a great conjecture, an entertaining thought, and make it personal. Make it pointed... to you, at you and in you.

"The body of Christ, given for **you.**" The blood of Christ, shed for **you.**" "I baptize **you** in the name of the Father..." These words and actions take what is a nice theory, a great conjecture, an entertaining thought, and make it personal. Make it pointed... to you, at you and in you.

I think of friends and people I have met who speak of their parents as those who took care of them, provided for them, looked out for them, but never heard them say..." I love you" or "I am proud or pleased with you." And I hear the pain in their voice. And if you asked them if their parents did love them, they would say, "Of course. Look at all they did for me." But the words were never said.

SO...

Some things just need to be said. Some things just need to be heard.

It isn't enough to just think a certain way about them. It isn't enough to just feel a certain way about them.

Some things just need to be said. Some things just need to be heard.

"Beloved child, well pleased." "Very good." "Hail Mary full of grace." These are the words that are spoken at the beginning of our lives. They are also the words that will be spoken at the end.

If Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end...then the beginning and the end are the same. If we are declared "Very good, beloved child, and full of grace" at the beginning, then we shall be declared it at the end. For as St. Paul writes in Romans 11:29, "The gifts and call of God are irrevocable." And so, the one who judges at the end, has already judged us from the beginning.

"Very good, beloved child, and full of grace."

I once had a professor in seminary who said the purpose of a sermon was not to explain the text to people, but to do the text to people. Make it real. Make it come alive. Make it happen.

Well, I fear I have spent too much time explaining and not enough doing...

So let me just do the text.

"You are God's beloved child, with whom God is well pleased."

Amen

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

Be Still, know that I am God

You Lord Are In This Place

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)

Dwell Among Us

Keep moving and living and breathing in us
Keeping working and singing and speaking through us
You dwell among us...
With all this life I long to see, more of You and less of me
Lord send Your spirit here to work in us

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Let Your Servant

Let your servant now go in peace, O Lord
Now go in peace according to your word