



Sept. 30, 2018 Mark 9:38-50 & Nu. 11: 25-29

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Transforming Fire](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Our Inability to Cast Out Demons](#)

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

John Pilch remind us that “Groups gather around a leader, and group members pledge and display their loyalty to that leader. The disciples of Jesus want to safeguard the distinct identity and prerogatives of their group. Thus, they do not deny that a nonmember of their group can cast out demons, but if he uses Jesus’ name he should join the group and pledge loyalty to its leader. If not, he ought to stop using Jesus’ name. That is the normative perspective in a group-centered society.” Jesus is including anyone that is apparently enabled by God to do good.

. [The Cultural World of Jesus](#). The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1996. Page 142.

Mark 9: 38-50

38 Teacher," said John, "we saw a man **driving out demons** in your **name** and we told him to stop, because he was not **one of us.**" 39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my **name** can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not **against** us is **for**

us. 41 I tell you the truth; anyone who gives you a **cup of water** in my **name** because you **belong** to **Christ** will certainly not **lose** his **reward.** 42 And if anyone causes one of these **little ones** who **believe** in me to **sin,** it would be better for him to be **thrown into the sea** with a large **millstone** tied around his **neck.** 43 If your **hand** causes you to **sin, cut it off.** It is better for you to enter life **maimed** than with two **hands** to go into **Gehenna,** where the **fire** never goes out. 45 And if your **foot** causes you to **sin, cut it off.** It is better for you to enter life **crippled** than to have two **feet** and be thrown into **Gehenna.** 47 And if your **eye** causes you to **sin, pluck it out.** It is better for you to enter the **kingdom of God** with one **eye** than to have two **eyes** and be thrown into **Gehenna,** 48 where “their **worm** does not die, and the **fire** is not **quenched.** 49 *Everyone will be **salted** with **fire.** 50 “**Salt** is good, but if it loses its **saltiness,** how can you make it **salty** again? **Have salt** among yourselves, and **be at peace** with each other.”*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus teaches us to identify things that cause us to sin and get rid of it. What helps me do this best?

PRAYER: Teacher Jesus, you once again use the moment to reveal God’s action in anyone who is open to aiding a suffering person regardless of whether they are “certified” to do so. Then you ask us to be brutally honest with ourselves about our motives for what we do. It has been said that “We are punished by our sins more than for our sins.” by Fr. Richard Rohr. Help me as I take inventory of all the ways I fail to love and see God’s power anything I witness compassion. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

DRIVING OUT DEMONS: In Mark 9:14f the disciples encounter a failure in being able to drive out a demon, and now they find someone not of their company able to do so. This evokes an immediate reaction, and they want Jesus to forbid this behavior.

What are the possible reasons for this response? How do you feel about Jesus’ response?

NAME: Knowing someone’s name was believed to give you power over him or her. In earlier accounts, the ‘demons’ knew Jesus’ name. Using someone’s name implied that he or she gave you the power to speak in their name.

Has someone used your name for his or her own advantage? Have you ever used someone’s name for your advantage? What feelings do you remember about those events? Can this give insight into the minds of the disciples?

ONE OF US: It seems wrong to the disciples that someone who was an outsider should have abilities that even they did not possess. They wanted to wall in God’s freedom.

How do you feel when someone who hasn’t “paid their dues” seems to have more than you do? What feelings do you have when others seem to have God’s ear from non-Christian traditions?

AGAINST / FOR: The disciples were against the man and Jesus saw that God was for him; otherwise he would not be given the power.

How do you decide whether God is for or against something?

CUP OF WATER: Offering a cup of water was an offering of friendship. There are many references to offering drinks of water in the Hebrew Scriptures, beginning with Gn. 21:19. Jesus is implying that anyone, who offers friendship, is included in God's blessing.

What does this tell us about Jesus' God?

BELONG: To belong to someone, is to be identified with that person. In Jesus' day, belonging was of vital importance. It often meant you lived or died. (See information below)

What is Jesus saying about anyone who offers friendship in his name?

CHRIST: Jesus uses the word Christ (Messiah) only twice in the four Gospels. Here and in Mt. 23:10. In each both cases, it deals with service, not privilege.

What do you think of when you hear the words, Christ / Messiah? Is your understanding more in tune with the disciples than with Jesus?

LOSE / REWARD: What is in it for me seems to be the basic question hiding in many of the examples in scripture.

How does this example help you to understand Jesus' God better? Is that what keeps you coming back to the scriptures?

LITTLE ONES: The 'little ones' are those who lack what it takes to make it on their own, and they know it.

Are you a little one?

BELIEVE: Many in Jesus' day believed in him simply because they knew he loved them. They were not occupied with all the theological nuances contained in the laws and practices. They found a God that accepted them as they were.

Do the gospels and the preaching /teaching from the gospels, reveal this same unconditional love to you? If not, why?

SIN: To sin was to "miss the mark". In some translations it is to be led astray.

In what ways has a 'believer' led you astray? How did this affect your ability to hit the mark?

THROWN INTO THE SEA: One of the most frightful terrors of the day was the sea. It was thought to have no bottom, and you would fall forever. The Romans favored this method of execution because it was full of terror.

What kind of punishment would have this same potential for terror today?

MILLSTONE: A millstone often weighed several hundred pounds. No body with this kind of weight would ever come to the surface again.

Have you ever had a 'millstone' tied around your neck? Was it done to you, or did you tie it yourself?

NECK: Our necks are one of the most vulnerable parts of our bodies. It comes between the head and the heart.

How does Jesus' understanding of God bring our heads and hearts together?

HAND/S / FOOT /FEET / EYE /S: In this combination of examples, Jesus is urging the disciples to be full of care about what they do, and why they do it.

Where are you most vulnerable to using your abilities in the wrong way?

CUT IT OFF / PLUCK IT OUT: Jesus is not advocating self-mutilation, but self-control.

Is there anything you need to 'cut / pluck' in order to avoid missing the mark?

MAIMED /CRIPPLED: Being maimed or crippled in this life does not prevent us from enjoying eternal life.

What does this tell us about God?



GEHENNA: Gehenna was the town dump that eternally smoldered from internal combustion. It was often used as the place to sacrifice children in pagan rituals.

What makes this an ideal example of the opposite of God's presence?

FIRE: Jesus reaches for metaphors that evoke strong responses from the people. Fire, especially fire in the town dump, must have had a powerful effect on his audience.

If you were to reach for a metaphor today that could evoke the same strong response from people, what one would you use?

KINGDOM OF GOD: The kingdom of God is where God's will is done perfectly.
How does missing the mark (sin) keep that kingdom away?

WORM: Worms consume, as does the fire.
What makes these realities powerful metaphors for Jesus?

QUENCHED: We started by quenching thirst with a cup of water, and end with the unquenchable fires of Gehenna.
What is it about sin that has a form of unquenchable fire about it? Who does it consume?

SALT, SALTY, SALTINESS, SALTED: (See references below) The right amount of salt can mean the difference between life and death.
How does this teaching help us get the right amount of 'salt' in our lives?

BE AT PEACE: The disciples were upset that others were encroaching on their territory.
Do you think they settled down enough to be at peace?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 9:38-41 // Nm. 11:28; 1 Cor. 12:3; Lk.9: 49f; Mk. 9:40 // Mt. 12:30; Mk. 9:41 // Mt.10: 42; 1 Cor. 3:23; Mk. 9:42-47 // Mt. 5:29ff; 18:6-9; Lk. 17:2; Mk. 9:47 // Is. 66:24; Mk. 9: 48 // Is. 66:24; Mk. 9:50 // Lev. 2:13; Mt. 5:13; Lk. 14:34ff; Col. 4:6; (Note: In most manuscripts vs. 44 & 46 are omitted)

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Nu. 11:25-29; [Ps. 19: 8, 10, 12-14](#); James 5:1-6; Mk. 9:38-43, 45, 47-48
Revised Common Lectionary: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10 & 9:20-22; [Ps. 124](#); James 5:13-20; Mk. 9: 38-50

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

We don't think ourselves into a new way of living; we live ourselves into a new way of thinking. Richard Rohr

It has pleased God that divine verities should not enter the heart through the understanding, but the understanding through the heart. - Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), from "The Art of Persuasion", in *Pensées* (Thoughts)

The numerical value of the letters in the word "Satan" (Hebrew: *Hasatan*) is 364, the total number of days in a year, less one. Satan can accuse the Jewish people and lead them astray every day of the year, with the exception of Yom Kippur. On that day the Holy One, praised be He, says to Satan, "You have no power over them today. Nevertheless, go and see what they are doing." When Satan finds them all fasting and praying, clothed in white garments like angels, he immediately returns in shame and confusion. The Holy One asks him, "How are My children?" Satan answers, "They are like angels, and I have no power over them." Thereupon the Holy One, praised by He, puts Satan in chains and declares to His people, "I have forgiven you. Pg. 196
Hertzberg, Arthur. *Judaism*. NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

Remember the very word "satan" literally means the accuser. The constant satanic impulse is to try to change others instead of changing ourselves. Richard Rohr.

The ultimate spiritual practice, as I teach it, is facing everything and avoiding nothing. When you truly face everything and avoid nothing, you will no longer be afraid to stand tall—before your own conscience, before others, before God. This is because you are no longer hiding anything from yourself. Through this noble practice, you will cultivate integrity and discover the kind of soul-strength that only comes from fearlessly facing the truth. The instinctive defense mechanisms that the ego hides behind will crumble, and yourself and soul will become a transparent vehicle through which the evolutionary impulse can work in this world. ~ Andrew Cohen

What is it to live with suffering? Suffering is the necessary feeling of evil. If we don't feel evil we stand antiseptically apart from it, numb. We can't understand evil by thinking about it. The sin of much of our world is that we stand apart from pain; we buy our way out of the pain of being human. Jesus did not numb himself or withhold from pain. Suffering is the necessary pain so that we know evil, so that we can name evil and confront it. Otherwise we somehow dance through this world and never really feel what is happening. Brothers and sisters, the irony is not that God should feel so fiercely; it's that his creatures feel so feebly. If there is nothing in your life to cry about, if there is nothing in your life to complain about, if there is nothing in your life to yell about, you must be out of touch. We must all feel and know the pain of humanity. The free space that God leads us into is to feel the full spectrum, from great exaltation and joy, to the pain of mourning and dying and suffering. It's called the Paschal Mystery. The totally free person is one who can feel all of it and not be afraid of any of it. Richard Rohr

In practice, the monotheistic traditions often elevate Satan to a force independent of God, which technically is heresy and turn them into something more akin to Zoroastrianism, with its concept of the dueling deities of Light and Darkness. Pg. 139.

...our very breath can serve as a reminder that life is only possible if the exchange of inner and outer is undisturbed. Letting things in, feeling their impact, and, in turn, letting things out, expressing cleanly what we feel, is a spiritual practice that rinses the mind and heart. Pg. 65-6. Nepo, Mark. The Book of Awakening. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

Information of Gehenna in the bible: 2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; Is. 66:24; Mt. 5:22,29; 23:15,33; 10:28; 18:9; James 3:6; Luke 12:5.

“In order to find God in ourselves, we must stop looking at ourselves, stop checking and verifying ourselves in the mirror of our own futility, and be content to *be* in Him and to do whatever He wills, according to our limitations, judging our acts not in the light of our own illusions, but in the light of His reality which is all around us in the things and people we live with.”

“No Man is an Island” by Thomas Merton Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, New York 1955: Page 120

Hell traditionally denotes the place or state of being of unrepentant souls who are damned to eternal punishment after death. Derived from the Old Teutonic word *hel*, meaning "to conceal" or "to cover," the word *hell* is used in English translations of the Bible to represent both the Hebrew Sheol, an ethically neutral underworld for the departed, and the Greek Gehenna, the underworld for the punishment of the wicked from which the Christian concept of hell developed. The characteristics of an underworld pervade descriptions of hell. In Greek mythology, HADES is the underworld ruled by the god of that name, who is also known as PLUTO; in Norse mythology, HEL is a cold and shadowy subterranean realm. The Christian imagery of hell as a fiery underworld comes from the New Testament, where hell is depicted as a "lake that burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). Two of the most famous and extensive descriptions of hell in Western culture come from John Milton's PARADISE LOST and Dante's DIVINE COMEDY. While the Western prophetic religions view hell as the Last JUDGMENT of those souls that will be eternally separated from God, most Eastern religions conceive of hell as a stage that souls pass through on their way to a different existence.

Exorcism is the ritual act of expelling DEMONS, or evil spirits, from persons or other creatures. In former times, most sickness was believed to have been caused by the activity of such spirits. Traditionally, various levels of demonic possession have been believed to occur, and the rites of exorcism have varied accordingly. Simple blessings may be given in order to remove persons or things from the presence or power of evil. In this sense, exorcism is a kind of prayer for healing, since evil and sin are often considered as the causes of sickness, disharmony, and death. In the strict meaning of exorcism, the level of possession is such that the personality of the person possessed is completely taken over by the personal presence of the devil. Cases of involuntary as well as voluntary possession have been claimed; in other words, the evil spirits choose their victims in some cases without their cooperation. Exorcism is practiced in many religions throughout the world. In Islam it is called *da'wah*. In Roman Catholicism, the practice is regulated by canon law, and must be authorized by a bishop. Traditional Judaism has a large body of literature dealing with the exorcism of evil spirits (*dibbukim*). In Japan, Nichiren Buddhist monks perform exorcisms based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The New Testament records many instances of exorcisms performed by Jesus. In one of the most dramatic of these, he expelled "a legion" of unclean spirits from a possessed man, which then entered into a herd of swine and drove them into the sea (Mark 5) taken from: Grolliers Multimedia Encyclopedia

Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1224, fol. 2 recto, col. 1: “For he who is not against you is for you. He who today is far away will tomorrow be near you.”

To cause one of the little ones to stumble is to commit a sexual offense against a child. The rabbis called the offense “playing with children.” Today the same offense would be labeled “child molestation.” For a grown man to have sex with a young boy was abhorrent to many living in the ancient Near East. Praising the ethos of Jews, the Sibylline Oracles say that “they do not engage in impious intercourse with male children, as do Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Romans, spacious Greece, and many nations of others, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of immortal God, which they transgressed.” (Sib. Or. 3: 595-600; 3: 185-87; 5: 166, 387).

In the Hebrew Bible the “foot” is a well-attested euphemism for the male sex organ (see Ex. 4:25; Is. 6:2; Ruth 3:4,7,8,14). Each of the sayings in Mk. 9: 42-48 was originally a very powerful statement about sexual offenses.

Collins, Raymond F. Sexual Ethics and the New Testament. NY. Crossroads. 2000. Pages 52-72

A teacher ought to be a stranger to the desire for domination, vainglory, and pride. A teacher should not be fooled by flattery, nor be blinded by gifts, conquered by the stomach, nor dominated by anger. A teacher should be patient, gentle and humble as far as possible; successfully tested and without partisanship, full of concern, and a lover of souls. Amma Theodora

Real life comes to be itself precisely in moving beyond the limits of control and certainty. Trust is integral to real life. We have an inner need to trust, to believe, to live in a mutual recognition with others. Interdependency cannot happen without it. This

interdependency is energized by the unpredictable and new which occurs when separate beings merge and form a new reality. This is life, which comes to itself beyond the predictable, secure, and controllable. Fr. David Bock

If we take seriously the attribute of divine omnipresence and the revelation of God as Love, then we cannot help but affirm that God is lovingly present always and everywhere. There is no place or circumstance in which this is not the case, so the question this raises for us is whether we are open to this ongoing encounter with God. In each and every moment, our attention is "somewhere," but where? Are we open to the God who is lovingly present to us, or are we "somewhere else?" Phil St. Romain

"One of the chief obstacles to this perfection of selfless charity is the selfish anxiety to get the most out of everything, to be a brilliant success in our own eyes and in the eyes of other men. We can only get rid of this anxiety by being content to miss something in almost everything we do. We cannot master everything, taste everything, understand everything, drain every experience to its last dregs. But if we have the courage to let almost everything else go, we will probably be able to retain the one thing necessary for us - whatever it may be. If we are too eager to have everything, we will almost certainly miss even the one thing we need. Happiness consists in finding out precisely what the 'one thing necessary' may be, in our lives, and in gladly relinquishing all the rest. For then, by a divine paradox, we find that everything else is given us together with the one thing we needed.

Merton, Thomas. *No Man is an Island*. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, New York, 1955) Page 130

Any time we open ourselves up to fear, we fall prey to his deceptions and intimidations. Yet, if we submit our hearts to God and stand in faith, we can resist those first fearful thoughts. As we yield to God we can master our reactions to fear and the enemy will soon flee.

- Francis Frangipane

Jesus promised his disciples three things -- that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble. Do you qualify? - F.R. Maltby

The role of salt in the Bible is relevant to understanding Hebrew society during the Old Testament and New Testament periods. Salt is a necessity of life and was a mineral that was used since ancient times in many cultures as a seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, a component of ceremonial offerings, and as a unit of exchange. The Bible contains numerous references to salt. In various contexts, it is used metaphorically to signify permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, value, and purification.

Salt is mentioned in: Gn. 19:26, Ex. 30:35; Lev. 2:13; Nu. 18:18; Dt. 29:22; Josh. 15:62; Judg. 9: 45; 2 Sam. 8:13; 2 Kgs. 2:21, 14:7; 1 Chron. 18:12; 2 Chron. 13:5, 25:11; Ezra 4:14, 6:9, 7:22; Job 6:6, 39:6; Ps. 60: 11; Jer. 17:6, 49:8; Ezek. 16:4, 43:24, 47:11; Zeph 2:9; Wis. 10:7; Mt.5:13; Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:34; Col. 4:6; James 3:12.

Mk. 9:33–50: Receiving disciples (Mt 18.1–9; Lk 9.46–50). 34–37: Servant, an exhortation to prepare for a lower status position, followed up by the example. The child did not represent innocence but a secondary status, lesser human. Symbolically, accepting a child in my name, as a true human representative, is analogous to receiving Jesus as sent from God (10.13–16). 42: Put a stumbling block in this context means to discourage people, no matter how low their status in the outer world, from staying within the movement. 43: Hell or "Gehenna" (see translators' note b), originally a valley south of Jerusalem. The site of rites condemned in Jer 7.31, it became the term for hell (Mt 5.22; Lk 12.5). The image, like that of being drowned (v. 42), is one of the destruction of the person (drowning, burning, being devoured by worms all destroy the body). 43–47: Hand . . . foot . . . eye, in general, the means of carrying out sinful deeds (stealing, coveting, etc.); if sexual sins are meant specifically, there may be allusions to Heb "foot" as euphemism for genitals (Isa 7.20) and of "eye" as transgressing sexual boundaries (Lev 20.17–21). 49: Salted with fire, perhaps preserved (from worse fate) by punishment that is short of destruction. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#) Pgs. 79-80.

In our individualistic society, structural sin is accepted as good and necessary on the corporate or national level. Large companies, churches, and governments get away with and are even applauded for killing (war), greed, vanity, pride, and ambition. The capital sins are rewarded at the corporate level but shamed at the individual level. Richard Rohr

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.140-144 . To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pgs. 143-147.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 165-168.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs. 133-136.

Janice Grana Ed. Images. _St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. **Integrity:** Page 123

Shea, John. **The God Who Fell From Heaven**. Argus Communications, Allen, TX. 1979. **A Prayer to the True Man:** Page 84.

William R. White. **Stories for the Journey**, Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. **The Teacher:** Page 99.

William J. Bausch. Storytelling. Twenty-Third Pub. Mystic, CT. 1984. **Crete:** Pages 127-8