

CREATED GAY

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Most Fab of All?

by Gary Simpson

Mark 9:30-37 (KJV) Jesus and his disciples went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

Have you ever held your breath in church, hoping nobody would find out? Perhaps, like me, you have held your breath in church, hoping that you would not be assaulted. This is a free breathing zone. Here we do not wear straight jackets, so we can breathe. We do not take the Bible straight out of context. And that gives us the liberty in Christ to breathe.

We do not have to hold our breath, because queer churches understand that the foundation and the core of the Christian faith is love, not doctrine; charity, not conformity. Queer congregations, like other persecuted churches, tend to focus more on the core of the faith, grace and love, and we tend to be less concerned with minor doctrinal differences.

One of the commentaries I read frustrated me and had me wanting to speak on a different Bible passage, because the commentator glorified children and seemed to make it sound like being a child was almost the ultimate Christian state. The last thing I want is to make LGBT people believe that they should be passive and helpless like a little child. Then it dawned on me that children have atomic-bomb level of self-advocacy skills. The advocacy tenacity of a two year old - "No!" And the terrorizing power of advocacy held by a teething baby. Non-stop fussing and crying. Amazing how a little bundle of human flesh can make entire families and teams of health care people respond. Perhaps, the social justice part of me is okay with LGBT people being like children.

There are times when silence almost seems sinister. In the Gospel story, Jesus asked the disciples what they were talking about and all grows silent, too silent. Nobody wants to answer Jesus, leaving the disciples convicted by their silence.

Traditionally, children were to be seen, not heard. Children were not to speak unless they were spoken to by an adult. In the eyes of the law, there was a tendency to see children as the property of their parents. Commentator William Barclay notes that there were times when

children were "barred from a church because the church was considered to ancient and secret for such as they."¹

Compare that perspective of children with what Jesus did.

Jesus took a child in His arms and talked to the disciples. "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me . . ." The words of Jesus convict people of faith. Those who are relatively powerless, those who are so weak and powerless that they struggle to advocate for themselves, those who are financially vulnerable, those who are hated, those who are rejected by society, those who are bashed, those who society thinks should neither be seen nor heard, are to be welcomed in the Kingdom of God.

The story is told of a church that hired a painter to create a painting of thousands of children standing around the throne of God. The painter painted his heart out, creating many children at the throne of God. He went to bed. During the night, he heard a sound coming from his painting room. He ran to see what was going on and discovered a man modifying his painting. "Stop! You are going to ruin the painting," he cried.

The stranger responded, "You already ruined the painting."

"Ruined! What do you mean?" cried the painter.

"You have many colors and all of the children are White. Who told you that only White children will be in heaven?" replied the stranger.

"I ah just thought that was the way it was," replied the artist.

The stranger continued, "I will paint their faces in every color and shade of every face. They are all there, for they have all answered my call."²

Adding to the story - at Calvary, Christ colored the faces of many of God's children around the throne the most fab color of all, rainbow. You are in God's painting.

To members of the queer community, Jesus' words convict us of silencing and rejecting bisexual, asexual and trans people. When we erase people from community history, from community presence and from community advocacy, we reject a child. As people of faith, our rejecting a group from the queer community and especially from the queer community of faith is essentially rejecting a child in Christ's name.

The story does not end with verse 37, where the liturgical schedule says we are to stop reading and thinking. I am going to commit a liturgical sin. My Baptist background tells me that it might be okay to sin against liturgy. As Paul Harvey used to say, "And the rest of the story."

Mark 9:38-42 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For

¹ William Barclay. *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark*. (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 2001), ebook.

² Barclay (2001), ebook.

whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

There are a few movers and shakers in Evangelical circles that not all of us know. John MacArthur, the pastor of Grace Community Church, is an influential Evangelical pastor and author. He has the radio program *Grace to You* and is the president of The Master's College and The Master's Seminary.³ John MacArthur notes that Jesus confirms that the work as done in His name and that it was a miracle.⁴

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer and asexual people of faith perform a miracle every single day. John W. Peterson, who pinned the well-known hymn "It Took a Miracle," got it partially correct when he notes that it took miracles to put the stars in place and to hang the world in space, but when God saved him, cleansed him and made him whole "it took a miracle of love and grace." The miracle is not that God, an infinitely loving being, would love God's children and would extend grace to God's children. The miracle is that somehow we understood the depth of God's love. And the bigger miracle is what that does in our lives. A miracle we can see daily is the miracle of those who hated, loathed and damned themselves, hated, loathed and damned their God-given desires and hated, loathed and damned their bodies starting to treat themselves with respect and dignity. People of faith live the miracle of the transforming power of the risen Christ.

There are homophobic religious leaders who, like Christ's disciples, forbid people of God who do not follow them - who do not follow their theology. They forbid queer people of God from performing the miracle of the life of faith, because we follow not their graceless theology. And those homophobic church leaders dare to violate Christ's command not to forbid anyone performing miracles in Christ's name when they cast us out of their churches and damn us to hell.

Just because our homophobic and transphobic brothers and sisters in Christ want to shout, "Lip sync for your life and don't screw it up," every time they think of us does not mean that God hates sexual minority people's and that God will condemn God's queer tribe to hell. The Kingdom of heaven is not like Rhu Paul's Drag Race.

Jesus' words "forbid him not" are not just words of sober second thought for homophobic religious leaders. To the queer community, Jesus' words "forbid him not" apply to more than our rejection and exclusion of bisexual, trans and asexual people. His words hit much closer to home than that. Jesus is telling His queer disciples, "Reject not yourself." How many times have we forbid ourselves, because we believed that we were too perverted and too evil, too damaged, too hurt, to be a living miracle for God?

I do not get into Shakespeare very often, but I ran across something, strictly by accident, that caught my attention. In the Shakespearean play "Troilus and Cressida," there is an interesting line.

³ "John F. MacArthur." Wikipedia. 07 August 2015, 13 August 2015. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._MacArthur>.

⁴ John MacArthur. "The Virtue of Being Last." Grace to You, You Tube Channel. 14 June 2012, 11 July 2015. <<http://youtu.be/ssQIGFgfAjQ>>.

Troilus notes, "You cannot shun yourself." And Cressida replies, "Let me go and try."⁵

When God hears you say, "Let me go and try," the response of God echoes through the ages, from creation, gaining volume and momentum at the burning bush in Exodus and gaining even more volume and momentum at Calvary is, "Not on my shift!"

Some of us spent years straight-washing and whitewashing our faces, thinking that was the only way we could be seen at the throne of God. Tonight, God points to the painting of the throne of grace, the throne of God. You are there. God points you out. Tonight, God gives you the pallet of paint and the paint brush and says, "Paint your face with the colors it is supposed to be." For some of us, our face will be rainbow. God is proud to see your rainbow face at the throne of God!

⁵ William Shakespeare. "Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene 2." *OpenSource Shakespeare*. n.d., 06 September 2015. <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=troilus&Act=3&Scene=2&Scope=scene>.