



SIEBENQUELL

The Wildness of God: The Way of the Holy Springtime I

When Jesus breaks into our Lives



SOURCE: FRANK DERER FOR NABU

Lent should be a holy springtime for the people who celebrate it. Just as spring puts an end to winter and prepares the warmth of summer, so the holy springtime should put an end to that which brings death and pave the way for the fullness of life in the resurrection.

But what does this Lenten path look like? We are often called upon to gather, to pray and fast so that we can ask the Lord to come and take his place with us. We want to invite him again and then open ourselves to his gifts, his guidance and his enlightenment. This, we believe, is the way of the holy springtime.

Not really! Of course, we can invite Jesus and welcome him with all our heart. But that is not the sole exercise of the 40 days. We should certainly prepare for an encounter with Jesus, but the biblical narratives warn us in advance that he is a God who breaks into our lives whether we find it convenient or not.

The exercise of this time is to deal with Jesus when he breaks into our lives uninvited and unexpectedly. The rather tame and domesticated exercise of invitation is not the same as engaging with the wild spirit of our God. Jesus embodies this wildness of God.

Invitation can be controlled, organised and easily restricted. When we invite someone, even if it is Jesus himself, we decide when and if it happens, when and where it is convenient for us, who is allowed to come, how long it lasts and how it is organised.

Surprises, on the other hand, are wild, untameable, unpredictable, spontaneous and uncontrollable. The Gospels often describe moments when Jesus breaks into our lives in precisely this manner. And after his resurrection, the experience only becomes more intense. So, if we only spend the 40 days dealing with the invitation and not with the surprise of the break-in, how are we prepared for the experience that Jesus brings with him in every resurrection story, namely that no one is expecting him?

John Shea wrote years ago: »Most people who have drunk deeply of God have walked wildly through life.« Thus, the holy springtime must prepare us to walk wildly through life. Because the encounter with Jesus is the experience of dealing with a wild, untameable God. What we have almost completely lost sight of is the fact that Jesus is always good for a surprise. We should bear in mind that although all of Jesus' surprises are life-giving, they are not all pleasant.

Let us take the stories of Jesus seriously. He does not overwhelm the disciples with information or blunt them with theological descriptions. He merely introduces them to a new situation. As this situation develops, they deal with their questions and possibilities, and very gradually new revelations emerge. But such revelations are never immediately grasped by us. Jesus brings neither canon law nor the catechism into the boat of life. Realisation only germinates gradually in the apprentices, and the knowledge they have gained develops step by step. This in turn requires us, who want to follow Jesus, to refuse to walk on well-trodden paths. The old familiar maps do not satisfy us. Jesus pushes forward, transcends the familiar boundaries and brings us reports from regions of life and the heart that no cartographer has ever entered before.

In the encounter with Jesus, development, discovery, and the adventurer's joy of experimentation are indispensable. We suffer from the relentless urge to domesticate God. However, the intense experiences with Jesus cause wildness in his people. When he breaks into our lives, a new language, new words and new speech are the consequence. Jesus is not satisfied with a mere repetition of old religious habits and the parroting of inherited interpretations. Well-worn, outdated explanations and interpretations are exposed, and their banality no longer offers us any refuge.

If we want to take these stories about Jesus during the holy spring seriously, then the experience will be what Joni Mitchell describes while writing one of her most famous songs. » I wrote 'Big Yellow Taxi' on my first trip to Hawaii. I took a taxi to the hotel and when I woke up the next morning, I threw back the curtains and saw these beautiful green mountains in the distance. Then, I looked down and there was a parking lot as far as the eye could see, and it broke my heart [...] this blight on paradise. That's when I sat down and wrote the song.« The refrain of this song is: »They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.«

Our Holy Springtime should awaken a similar reaction in us. Jesus gave us fire, adventure and challenges. They took this Lord away from us and gave us chamomile tea, hand fans, lullabies and sleeping pills.

During these 40 days I want to guide you through the story contained in Luke 5:1-11. There we will discover how Jesus enters our rooms, claims our time, changes our direction, makes demands on our strength and how he deeply and shockingly intervenes in the clear world of our own ideas and perceptions of how life works. At the end of the holy springtime, we will turn our attention to the Gospel stories of the resurrection and discover how this Lukan story prepares us for the encounter with the Risen One. For there is no resurrection story in which we are not confronted with these surprising upheavals of Jesus to our domesticated and serene lives.

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