



Lent reflection for February 26, 2024

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A reading from Mark 3:7-19

Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him, for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, "You are the Son of God!" But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder), and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who handed him over.

Today's Reflection is by Rich Garr

I'm thinking Rock n' Roll here. Rock gods like The Beatles in February of '64, exactly 60 years ago. Right here in NYC. "I Wanna Hold Your Hand". Girls fainting and screaming and folks crushing up on them as they're trying to get to their limo.

Except Jesus was one guy, so take all that pressure and hoopla surrounding the Beatles landing stateside- and all the travesty that went along with it- and concentrate that in one man. This Guy must have really been something. So Jesus had a crew- an official twelve- he named. They weren't all great. One even turned him in to the Roman cops. Yikes. Picking a buddy like that, I guess we know he's human. But at the same time, stories of Jesus snowballed through the

centuries. They branched and broke. Whispered and bellowed, seeping into every corner of the earth. A thousand languages later, we still have these stories. We celebrate Him. The Beatles definitely did some great work. They very literally spoke our own language. Nothing was translated. But Jesus- his words were sincere, and they were backed by a pattern of action that tapped into something universal. His stories not only resist degradation, but they seem to be empowered by centuries of translation. Maybe because they weren't produced by publicists or algorithms. They went viral because this guy was GOD. And love was at the core of his being.

I'm currently reading All About Love by bell hooks. She talks about the re-centering of love in the world. So I'm thinking, 'this is what Jesus did. He's a model for this.' And He was part human. But also part God. And He's also, mysteriously: Holy Spirit. Maybe not entirely coincidentally, the music of Bob Marley has been inspiring me lately. Not only his musical lyrics and tone, but through his life and actions. A major found of inspiration for Marley was longtime Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie: another incredible leader. He was seen by many as an actual god. Each one of these leaders I mention here were held at some level of deity- albeit with unique and very different circumstances. They each variously emphasized love (i.e. "All You Need is Love"), and were tied to some facet of spirituality. In the year I was born in 1980 (maybe not coincidentally on February 14th?!) Bob Marley drew over 100,000 folks to a concert in Milan. It notably shocked the pope, and is still Italy's largest ever concert. By some accounts it even marked a turn away from polemic, often violent political strife in the country.

A new Bob Marley movie called One Love comes out this week. It will be interesting to see how crowds like this Milan moment are portrayed. Maybe like Jesus in His heyday?! Haile Salassie and bell hooks didn't harness the power of music like Marley or the Beatles, but I recognize them as carrying the same simple message of love that drew huge crowds 2000 years back.



Rich is a proud Cleveland-born Brooklynite of 20 years. Broadly considered a collage artist, his affinity for layered histories sometimes take the form of quirky walks and memorials. He takes commissions and teaches classes between time divided amongst his Gowanus art studio, small but mighty family, and wonderful sidewalk wanderings.