

# Rewilding Jesus

March 23, 2024



An Independent Interfaith Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, with Chris Johnson, RScP

## Taizé

**Rev. Diana – We follow the bell to the stillness within... 3 Bells**

**Chris – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana –** Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning, my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

**Rev. Diana & Chris – Opening Chants**

 **Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson**

 **I Am Remembering, written by Rev. Melissa Phillippe**

**Rev. Diana –** I invite you to enter the flow of Taizé...taking a long, slow, cleansing breath in, breathing in Peace, noticing the natural pause that comes, and then let it go, sending Peace into the room. Breathing in the Peaceful, Powerful Presence of the Divine, pausing, and then sending that Presence into the world.

Becoming more Peaceful, both within and without, as we breathe together...feeling the connection with our fellow humans, and with all other creatures...we share the same life-giving air...the breath connects us to the plants, as well. Breath is Life...Life is breath...there is nothing to separate us from Life...every creature, plant, rock, and grain of sand...every drop of water...all that exists, no matter how large or small is an intricate and irreplaceable part of the One Life. Take a moment to breathe in that sense of connection...

Sensing our deep connection with all of Life, we know it is time to rise, in awareness and in action...and to use the gifts that we have been given for the Greater Good of All.

It is time to use our discerning minds to choose Wholeness over woundedness, Peace over violence, to choose Love over hatred or indifference. It is time to use our power of imagination consciously to create the world we want to leave our children.

This month's theme is **The Sacred Masculine**...the Strong, Active, Supportive Energy that lives within each of us...and today, on this beautiful Palm Sunday, we

come to a deeper understanding of a powerful example of ***The Sacred Masculine***...this morning, we are ***Rewilding Jesus***.

I use as my primary sources for Taizé, two beautiful books. First, *Days of Awe and Wonder* by Marcus J. Borg; and second, *The Flowering Wand* by Sophie Strand.

Who was the Jesus of our childhood...picture his image now...maybe he wore a stainless, white robe, had blond hair, twinkling blue eyes, and a serious look on his face. Or maybe you grew up with a different picture, or none at all. This morning, I invite you into a new story...

Slip on your first-century Jewish sandals...follow me into the lush, richly vegetated, densely flowering countryside of Galilee... Jesus, whose teachings were deeply grounded in the ecology of his region...in agriculture...in the soil, enriched by the very bones of his ancestors...in the blood and food offerings of ritual...Jesus, whose parables spoke of the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the lowly mustard seed...the itinerant Rabbi who saw the probable fall of his people if their ways of life didn't change drastically, and soon. There is a message for us in our own time as we look closely at what we know of his life.

Who was this man we call Jesus? We say that he was fully God and fully man...both human and Divine. This morning, we center our attention on his humanity, and on what an utterly remarkable human being he was.

By modern-day scholarly accounts, Jesus was a Jewish Mystic...he knew and experienced the Spirit as Reality.

He was a holy man...not humanly perfect, but rather, one who was in touch with the numinous, one who vividly and directly experienced the mystery and power of another realm...a mediator between this realm and the next. Jesus was a healer and was known for his miracles and exorcisms. He was one of many who made up a charismatic strand of Judaism. He practiced the spiritual disciplines common to the holy men of his time: fasting, solitude, contemplative prayer, and vision quest...or time in the wilderness. In his personal relationship with God, the Father, he used the intimate name Abba...Papa.

Jesus was a Jewish Mystic...and he was a Wisdom Teacher...one who lived and taught a particular path, or Way...one that led beyond convention, beyond the familiar...he walked the road less travelled. He was a gifted teacher, quick-witted and clever of tongue...and he taught a subversive, or alternative wisdom...one that challenged the beliefs and practices of his ancestors, and of the culture in which he lived.

And like the prophets of old, Jesus was a social prophet, a voice of protest directed at the domination systems of his day...against the economic and political oppression legitimated in the name of God. He was a revolutionary, passionate about social justice...he cared deeply about human suffering, and he saw that the

cause of much of that suffering grew out of systemic injustice...by the very structures of society. He was a Peace-loving and Passionate man. It was this passion that ultimately led to his death.

We've heard it said that Jesus was not the great exception, but the great example. What would it mean to take the life of Jesus as an example...to see him as a Way Shower?

It would mean living a life deeply centered in Spirit...a life that seeks to experience the Sacred in the day-to-day...to live a mystical life.

A mystic does not simply have a strong *belief* in God, she *knows* God, comes into direct experience of the Divine...is in relationship with the Creator...understands God to be an encompassing Spirit that is all around us, that runs through and expresses as all of Creation, and yet, is beyond the world of form...a mystic senses that the only thing separating him from Spirit is "the membrane of (his) own consciousness." Living a life in relationship to the Spirit of our own experience would be transformational...it would be present tense, present moment awareness. Just as our human relationships grow and deepen as we approach them with intention and attention, so does our relationship with Source grow in the same way.

Such a life would be lived by the alternative wisdom that Jesus taught...a radical centering in the Sacred, in contrast to the life of conventional wisdom that most of us live most of the time. Conventional wisdom is what our culture takes for granted as true...it directs us in how to live and tells us what is real. It is cultural consensus...what everybody knows. But conventional wisdom blinds us to wonders and awe...it causes us to create labels, to put things in boxes...to turn the miraculous into the ordinary. Conventional wisdom reduces our reality to the world of the visible, the world of our experience, and directs us to live as though the material, the measurable, is all that exists.

Taking Jesus as an example, as a Way Shower in our lives, means raising our own consciousness so that we recognize and acknowledge the many ways our cultural system causes suffering for other beings, and for our planet, and seek to change it. The ethical imperative that is demonstrated by his teachings and his life is both personal and political. It calls for both compassion and justice. It calls us to go beyond our current way of thinking and feeling...calls us into a radical decentering from the world of conventional wisdom and a recentering in God.

And a radical recentering in God does not leave us unchanged. It transforms us so that we begin to live more compassionately ...this is the true meaning of the word repentance.

Jesus had the audacity to rewrite a teaching from the Old Testament, "Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy," (Leviticus 19:2). Instead, in Luke 6:36, he said, "Be compassionate, as God is compassionate." The word for compassionate in both

Hebrew and Aramaic is related to the word womb...Be womblike, as God is womblike. Be life-giving, nourishing, caring and tender...be willing to serve...and when necessary, be fierce, protective...stand strong. "Compassion is not just a soft, fuzzy virtue. It can have passion and fierceness, as well." (Marcus J. Borg, *Days of Awe and Wonder*)

Jesus was educated in the history of his people. He saw them headed for yet another catastrophe due to their loyalties and blind spots. His teachings served to spark a renewal movement within Judaism that competed with other renewal movements of his time, and certainly threatened a way of life that Jews had known and practiced for centuries.

He was calling his followers into "an alternative community" with "an alternative consciousness." His acceptance of outcasts points to one whose identity is defined by his relationship with God rather than by cultural standards. He proclaimed the way of peace rather than war. He entered Jerusalem during the Passover Celebration through the eastern gate on a colt, knowing that the Romans would be entering from the western gate on their stallions. He was both a humble and powerful presence who demonstrated the choosing of Peace over violence, Love over hatred or indifference.

All of a sudden, life changes. In an instant, the scales are tipped, and nothing will ever be the same. This was the warning Jesus offered, the alarm he was sounding. He was not predicting the end of the world, but rather, another kind of change...a historical crisis for his people.

He was criticizing the present path they were choosing, and threatening destruction if they didn't change their ways. It seems to me that, in many ways, Jesus would feel right at home in our modern world.

For the time being, let us close in prayer...basking in the example set for us by this courageous and insightful teacher...and trusting in these words that he spoke: "It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work..." (John 14:10) and "and greater works than these will (you) do..." (John 14:12)

### **Closing Prayer**

The Truth of this story...the tale of the Rewilding of Jesus... resonates...

Putting God at the center of our lives changes our perspective.

We begin to recognize and accept the One Source as the well-spring of all we experience...the One Creative Power and Presence, always available to us, always responding to us, according to our choices...our intentions and attention, our motivations, and actions.

Forever giving us back what we send forth...always in Love...always respecting our freedom.

I Am, you Are, an extension...of the One Source.

This was the heart of Jesus's message.

We are all sons and daughters of God, vessels for Spirit's Love, Compassion and Justice.

It is ours to step into that Truth, to make these vessels strong...to keep these vessels humble.

Here, in this holy moment, I am reminded of Who and Whose I Am.

I allow the Truth of this message to permeate every part of my being.

I choose the mystical path...the Way of experiencing my own Divinity, and the Divinity in everyone and everything.

I choose the path of Wisdom...that which leads to what my heart knows to be true, despite what the world might show me.

And I choose the path of Compassion and Justice...making changes day by day that bring my actions into greater alignment with whatever is in the greatest service to the Whole.

And so I dedicate myself and my life to the Great Mystery that I call God...to the deep Wisdom that lives within me...to Compassion and Justice, in my life and in my world...and to the courage and strength that it takes to stand in Truth.

Thank You, Spirit, for this day, and for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that I would call beautiful and graceful, and those that challenge me to grow in character, resilience, and faith.

I walk in wonder, in reverence, in deep humility and gratitude for Your Creation, and for Your Powerful Presence, Wisdom, and Guidance in my Life. Thankful for all of it, I rest, knowing that my prayer is answered before it is spoken. And So It Is! Amen!

### **Chris – Musical Meditation**

 ***Christ In Me, Christ in You, written by Gary Lynn Floyd***

**Rev. Diana** – I invite you to Come back into the awareness of your body...notice the atmosphere in the room, and when you feel ready, gently opening your eyes and allowing your gaze to take in whatever is before you.

Feel free to look around and say good morning to everyone who is here celebrating with you this morning.

This is your Spiritual Family...one of your support systems. These are some of the people who care about you and are there for.

### **Love Offering**

As we close our Taizé Meditation, we offer the opportunity for you to share your financial good in support of the work we do in the world. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at [mysticheart.org](http://mysticheart.org). And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

**Rev Diana** – The local Farmers' Market starts up again the first Saturday of April. Get ready to join us in supporting local. We're still contributing monthly to Farmers' Footprint. We have time for this 2-minute reminder that Hope is Here!

### **Offertory Video – Farmer's Footprint**

 **Farmer Greg Reese: First Generation Farmer**

<https://youtu.be/eyt8jqxXD7c>

### **Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering**

Feel free to grab a cup of something warm next door and meet us back at 10:30 for a Conscious Conversation. We'll bless you on your way with

### **Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song**

 **A Soul's Blessing, written by Chris Johnson**

## *Conscious Conversation*

**Diana** – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...welcome to those joining online. If you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor here at Mystic Heart. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

### **Rev. Diana & Chris – Opening Music**

 **Welcome to the Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson**

 **One Big Family, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd**

 **The Light of the World by Chris Johnson**

**Rev. Diana** – Bringing awareness to the Presence of Spirit in the Body...letting go of all that holds us back...stepping into our Highest Potential...and fully engaging the imagination as we join in the creation of a **Love-Soaked World...**

Know with me now that we are creating a world where all humans embody and live from the Qualities of Spirit...Love, Kindness, Generosity, and Compassion...and from this way of being, I can feel the presence of a deep sense of Joy, Contentment, and Sufficiency. Can you feel it?

In this new world, all people honor and care for one another, for all of the life forms that share this beautiful earth, and for the earth Herself.

We remember that we are connected to all of Life...that we are dependent on the planet to sustain us, and on one another.

Being generous by our nature, and living a life true to our nature, we give of ourselves freely, offering the gifts we came here to give. With all needs met for every person, each one is free to share time and talent in ways that feed the soul.

By our every thought, word, and action, we are writing a new story in which all beings are well-fed...have the safety and comfort of home and a deep sense of belonging and purpose. We are so grateful that once and for all, health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Integrity, Compassion and Wholeness.

We welcome this new way of living, valuing every being for its uniqueness...we practice living Authentic lives...there is no need to defend or protect. With Love, Generosity and Kindness guiding every human heart, our world is free of hatred and violence. We recognize the abundance that surrounds us...giving and receiving flow freely in every direction and all beings gratefully receive all that is needed to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fulfilling lives.

The planet and its beings thrive like never before as we learn to see the sacred in everyone and everything...we walk in reverence and gratitude for all that we have been given.

We maintain this Vision day by day, moment by moment; we are not swayed by appearances. Each of us works to align our actions with our Vision, living these changes first in our own lives, with our families, friends, and neighbors...and a new world is being born. In this process of profound change, this Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, Family.

By the power of our deep faith, this prayer is acted upon, answered even before it is spoken, as Spirit knows our heart's desire and intent. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding...

...we release it to the Creative Power and Intelligence that I call God...to the One that gets it done...And so it is...Amen!

Bringing awareness back to the body, to the room, to this beautiful life, and to the amazing beings who share this space with us this morning...look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family.

Our theme this month is **Sacred Masculine**, and the topic of Conversation this morning is **Rewilding Jesus**. I'll give a really brief recap of Taizé this morning to give us a jumping off point for our Conversation...

We started by imagining the Jesus of our childhood...

**What picture are you getting?**

**Where did he live?**

**What kind of climate was he accustomed to?**



Then we slipped on our first-century Jewish sandals and envisioned what was more likely true...that Jesus lived in a lush, richly vegetated, densely flowering place...that his teachings were deeply grounded in the ecology of his region...in agriculture...in the soil, enriched by the very bones of his ancestors...in the blood and food offerings of ritual...that his parables spoke of the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the lowly mustard seed...

We said that he was fully God and fully man...both human and Divine, and we centered our attention on his humanity, and on what an utterly remarkable human being he was. Historically speaking, scholars believe three things about Jesus that guided his journey: he was a Jewish Mystic; he was a Wisdom Teacher; and he was a social prophet, a voice of protest directed at the domination systems of his day. He was a revolutionary, a Peace-loving and Passionate man.

And finally, we reflected on what modeling our life after his might look like, and on what effects this would have in our lives and in our world. There was a lot of detail, so if you missed out, you can pull up the video on our website or You Tube Channel.

Today, I'd like to start our Conversation with a statement I used at the end of Taizé: All of a sudden, life changes. In an instant, the scales are tipped, and nothing will ever be the same.

**Do you think that's a true statement?**

**What kinds of things can happen, or have happened, in your life where in an instant, everything changes?**

Sometimes in life, the things that were supposed to happen don't, and the **things that were never supposed to happen, do. We can never be truly prepared**, no matter how meticulous our preparation is.

**What is the most that we can do in moments like these?**

(take it moment by moment, and to the best of our ability, respond consciously instead of reacting)

**Do we ever really know how we will react or respond?**

This is where the stories of Jesus demonstrate how he was different than other human beings...no matter what happened (and he suspected this was not going to end well for him), he knew he would respond peacefully and lovingly.

**Does this mean that he never got angry? What are some examples from the stories we've heard?**

**Was he never afraid? Examples?**

The average person changes in the midst of crisis...Jesus did not change. He was the same person, no matter who he was speaking to. When he was invited to the synagogue to speak, he knew that people would expect things of him that he would or could not do.



And when he didn't live up to their expectations, that would be his demise. And yet, he spoke what he knew to be True.

**In society, how often do we face the expectations of others, and are expected to fall in line? Anyone want to share a brief experience?**

We often find ourselves in situations where we are expected to say certain things in certain ways, believe things without questioning...to present ourselves in certain ways. And if you dare to be different than what was expected, the nicest people can turn on you, and in the name of conformity, judge you...ostracize you...and you become an outcast in the community. Welcome to the life of Jesus. It's easy to talk about the Love of Christ and following the example he set.

**But what was it he was calling people to do? Love.**

**Love who?** Everyone...God, self, neighbors, enemies.

That's it. Not impose your will on someone else, just love. As much as we want to conform to human rules and norms, just like that, they change...something happens in life that changes everything. How many 5-year plans were ruined by the onset of the pandemic? How many dreams are shattered because one thing changes?

And so, Jesus was teaching that there was one constant...Love. The Love of God, and the Love we can extend to one another.

No matter how you translate those words...the Love of God...

**What do those words mean to you?**

(a personal relationship with a loving Father, a personal experience of the nurturing and caring Divine Mother, the sense of Forever-Givingness of a Force, a Power or Consciousness greater and beyond all that we can know with our human senses, a set of Universal Principles that can be counted on to bring possibility into form)

However you experience It, it is always with us, even while our world might be shaking and changing... "I, in the midst of you, and there."

This is nothing new...we've heard it a million times. But looking at the world around us, we're not done learning this lesson...it bears repeating. The Love of God doesn't change, we change. The question is, what are we changing into?

We don't need to influence millions of people, only the one before us, by our example. We see the spark of Divinity in the people in front of us, no matter who they might be. And just maybe, they will start to see the God in themselves that we see in them.

Ultimately, nothing else matters. Love transcends all difficulties. We can all speak the language of Love, no matter our religious, political, economic, or educational status. We can all choose to honor one another as the image and likeness, as expressions of God. When we are grounded in Love, life gets easier. If I am judged, I can trust that this is part

of the journey, for me and for the ones judging. For this moment, it is theirs to judge me, and it is mine to Love them. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Welcome to the life and the teachings of Jesus.

**Let's close in prayer:**

The Truth of this story...the tale of the Rewilding of Jesus... resonates...

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We begin to recognize and accept the One Source as the well-spring of all we experience...the One Creative Power and Presence, always available to us, always responding to us, according to our choices...our intentions and attention, our motivations, and actions.

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And I choose the path of Compassion and Justice...making changes day by day that bring my actions into greater alignment with whatever is in the greatest service to the Whole.

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Thank You, Spirit, for this day, and for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that I would call beautiful and graceful, and those that challenge me to grow in character, resilience, and faith.

I walk in wonder, in reverence, in deep humility and gratitude for Your Creation, and for Your Powerful Presence, Wisdom, and Guidance in my Life. Thankful for all of it, I rest, knowing that my prayer is answered before it is spoken. And So It Is! Amen!

Take a moment to allow your awareness to return to your body, to this space, to this beautiful gathering...welcome back.

## Love Offering

I invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial Good, should you choose to.

If you are at home, you can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our Donate Button or to find our mailing address.

We also have a Gracious Giving Program for those who would like to make a heartfelt monthly commitment of support so that we can more effectively budget and plan for our growth.

Tying in with our theme, please enjoy...


## Offertory Video

 **Monroe Crossing – Micah 6:8**


<https://youtu.be/7fHmVJ4wygk>


## Chris – Bless the Offering


### Invitations

 The Mystic Heart Book Club meets on Tuesdays – drop-ins are welcome.

 Fast Track to Wellness is meeting on Thursday from noon to 2 pm.

 Metaphysical Bible meets on Thursday from 3-5 pm with Practitioner Chris Johnson. Drop-ins are always welcome...BYOB.

 Please join us on Easter Sunday for a beautiful Gathering filled with . ceremony and lots of music. This is the time of Active Renewal...share in community as together, we celebrate New Life.

 We still need 10 people to register for the retreat with a deposit for it to happen this year. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Diana.

**There is more information available in the March Bulletin...take one home with you. And check out our amazing website.**

### Information Cards if new people

**Prayer Requests: I am available after service – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch**

### Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

 **Love Be With You**, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP, & Gary Lynn Floyd



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