



Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life
End over end, neither left nor to right
Straight through the heart of them, righteous up rights
Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life

Make me, oh, make me, Lord, more than I am
Make me a piece in Your master game plan
Free from the earthly temptation below
I've got the will, Lord, if You got the toe

... Bring on the brothers who've gone on before
And all of the sisters who've knocked on your door
All the departed, dear, loved ones of mine
Stick 'em up front in the offensive line

Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life
End over end, neither left nor to right
Straight through the heart of them, righteous up rights
Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life

... Yeah, dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life
End over end, neither left nor to right¹

Being serious about our Scripture and our faith does not mean we can't enjoy a smile, a giggle or even a whole-hearted laugh. This is one of those Sundays- stop being the frozen chosen and enjoy a rabbit trail or two. Enjoy this morning as you gear up for the Super Bowl tonight.

Yes, this is the Sunday we when remember Jesus, in the tradition of religiously observant Jews, being presented at the Temple. Jesus will be marked, first born son of Joseph and Mary, as one of the people of Israel. Mary will be purified following childbirth. Both Jesus and Mary will, through the acts and the sacrifice, be made whole and holy once again.

The tradition of "churching of women following childbirth" was part of our Anglican services until the early 20th century. The theology behind the service was to acknowledge the perils of childbirth – and there were many women and children who died in childbirth- and also to serve as a reminder that the child was a part of the congregation since this churching generally preceded baptism. This service grew out of the Jewish tradition that we read about in Luke today.

Most extraordinary events occur at the Temple and are captured in our reading. Two prophets – Simeon and Anna- have been waiting a long time for God to break into their world once again. It was thought that God had stopped talking to the people of Israel because they had been

¹ <http://www.metrolyrics.com/dropkick-me-jesus-lyrics-bobby-bare.html> (January 30, 2014)

hard-hearted or in the words found in Judges: the people did evil once again. They couldn't seem to stay on the path God laid out before them and so they wandered away and life became hard and they cried out to God and God set things right again – and again- and again. And then God stopped talking to the people: roughly 400 long years at the time Jesus was born.

These roughly 400 years are known as the Intertestamental Period. Years following the writing of Malachi and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Years when God seemed to be absent and the people waited and wondered. Where is God? Has God forgotten us? Have we finally been so bad that God has simply turned away from us?

The answer to those questions and to the fears is a resounding “no” from Christians.

Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life
End over end, neither left nor to right
Straight through the heart of them, righteous up rights
Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life

For us, following Jesus and his teachings leads us to a life that goes neither left nor right but rather through the righteous uprights- through the goal posts of life. We don't always get it right- we do veer off to the right or left from time to time. But that's ok because there is always at least one more down, one more opportunity to kick the field goal or to throw the long pass that connects to the receiver who runs down the field and crosses the goal line.

Make me, oh, make me, Lord, more than I am
Make me a piece in Your master game plan
Free from the earthly temptation below
I've got the will, Lord, if You got the toe

Admittedly, this isn't quite the theology with Jesus as field goal or point after kicker that we usually express. And, the plea for God to make us more than we are left to our own devices is a plea that many of us have made at one time or another. It is through God's grace that we are able to resist earthly temptation and turn ourselves, our souls and bodies, towards God.

Each of us has been created by God and thus is a part of God's master game plan. Each of us, with God's help, can live a life that witnesses to the love of God in Christ Jesus. And, most of us need some nudging – that Jesus toe if you will – from time to time to remain focused on the goal posts, looking neither left nor right.

... Bring on the brothers who've gone on before
And all of the sisters who've knocked on your door
All the departed, dear, loved ones of mine
Stick 'em up front in the offensive line

While this verse might seem more appropriate to All Saints Sunday, when we specifically remember the great cloud of witnesses that goes before us, our prayers each Sunday do include all the departed- that they may have eternal rest and that the light of God shine perpetually upon them.

We are formed by the brothers who've gone on before and all of the sisters who've knocked on God's door. They do, in at least a metaphorical sense, serve as our offensive line. They offer up to us examples of lives lived in response to the grace of God. They are the examples that we can follow when the call of the quarterback can hardly be heard over the roar of the crowd. They are the ones that help us persevere when we are tired, muscles are sore or we've lost the game and are heartsick.

Jesus came to be not only coach of kicker but also to be a merciful and faithful high priest. Jesus came to us – human beings- and not to help the angels, who as one person said on Tuesday morning, how much help do angels need? If angels need help then there is no hope for me!

There is hope for us for Jesus came to be a merciful and faithful high priest. Jesus spoke and taught in the synagogues. He read from scripture and interpreted it and the people were amazed at his grasp of the Torah and the authority with which he taught.

Jesus challenged the mores of the day: he upset the tables in the Temple when worship had given way to commerce. The Lord's House was supposed to be a place of prayer and not one where people were fleeced when buying the necessary Temple coin or sacrificial animals. Jesus cleansed the Temple, we say, so that it returned to its function as a place of worship and prayer.

Jesus, at the Last Supper, gave his disciples and us a way to remember his life and mission.
This is my body.
This is the blood of the new covenant.
Whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me.
Circle back to basics.
Circle back to what is truly important in your relationship with God and with each other.

Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life
End over end, neither left nor to right
Straight through the heart of them, righteous up rights
Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goal posts of life

Whoever you root for this evening, remember that Jesus is steady, sure and faithful. Jesus is merciful.

Jesus became human that we might be restored to right relationship with God.
Jesus gave up his life to show us a better way to live and to die.

Simeon and Anna serve as reminders that we are all waiting for Jesus. We are all waiting for the one whom God has promised. Even if there will be times in our life where our souls are figuratively pierced with a sword as Simeon told Mary by the cares and hurts of the world, we can still rest assured that God is with us.

Be like Jesus. At the end of this time at St. John's, return to your home and become strong, filled with wisdom and know that the favor of God will rest upon you. *Amen.*