

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 9, 2022



MISTAKES

when there is no "wrong thing"

by Drew Downs

This week's gospel is a bit of a puzzle for the astute reader. On the face of it, we may be led to think that Jesus healed a bunch of people and most of them screwed up by not saying thank you.

This is nonsense. Relatable, of course. And definitely a common response, for sure. But nonsense nonetheless.

How eager are we to condemn someone as

ungrateful when they don't say thank you? There are few things we relish more than such righteous outrage.

It is quite debatable to characterize these people as making a mistake, or worse, *misbehaving* because they took Jesus seriously when he said "Go and show yourselves to the priests." Let us not make a mistake of thinking that Jesus is calling them out for doing what he asked them to.

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

The Right Thing

Sometimes the disciples ask Jesus how to do something *his* way. That's what they are doing when they ask him how to pray. They want Jesus to teach them *his* way of praying.

And sometimes they ask for some kind of objective truth. *Tell us what is right?* That is something completely different.

The former puts the focus squarely on Jesus and the latter on some nebulous universal truth we assume just exists. Notably *outside of Jesus*.

We make the same mistake (albeit from a different angle) when we hear Jesus say, as he does in Luke 17, that we must rebuke a friend who offends and also forgive one who repents. Or, as he does this week, note that some of the people cured of leprosy didn't turn back to him.

How often do we read these things looking for an objective and universal "right thing"? Something that we can trot out in every situation and know *that* is what we're to do. Or worse, find ourselves judging Jesus for seeming to judge these people!

I generally have a hard time rebuking a friend. But I also, generally, do it easily, too. It really depends. More often than not, I think it depends on how much love is in my heart. Love for God. Love for them. And, yes, love for me.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 9, 2022

Collect

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 17:11-19

"But the other nine, where are they?"

Reflection

I went to seminary in Canada at Huron University College, which is a liberal arts college founded as a seminary for the Anglican Church of Canada. It is a fine school, which formed me more than any educational institution would hope to.

For three years I went to a school that was not in my home country, learning the make up of a church that is not my church. Of course, both of these are closely aligned with my own. Far more aligned, then say, a Catholic seminary in Rome or a Charismatic school in Africa. Something akin to ideological cousins.

Not unlike the Hebrew and the Samaritan, I suppose.

ORDINARY TIME

Huron is in London, Ontario. Which is about an hour due east of the border with Michigan. I crossed the border many, many times during the mid '00s. A time, more or less, fractured by the experience of September 11, 2001.

Later on, I spent two and a half years in a small town south of Port Huron, blocks away from the waters which divide the U.S. and Canada. I spent every day gazing at the land on the other side of that river, maybe a mile or two away. Imagining people over there, doing the same. Pondering the same.

We usually don't think of Michigan as a borderland. It's certainly not thought of the way Arizona is. But the experience of living along the border, where the person you run into *literally anywhere and anytime* could be from "over there" is valuable. Chances of running into Canadians drops off precipitously this side of Indianapolis.

I'm not writing an autobiography here. Just wanting to ground this moment in its most central idea: that they are now navigating the borderlands. The Jesus who told the clever (Hebrew) lawyer that the neighbor he is to love may be a Samaritan is now walking in that very place his fictitious characters were walking and acting (or not).

And now, as we approach this story, of Jesus healing ten people of leprosy, we must be careful of first impressions. Remember the border.

Jesus tells them to go see the priests, *and as they do*, Jesus heals them. One turns around and thanks him: the Samaritan. I don't suppose Jesus's words are a critique of the others here. Just noting what is taking place. The one who comes from a cousin faith tradition gives thanks to God, but the insiders head off, listening to Jesus. Doing what he commanded. Far more valuable as something notable than condemnable.

Also notable is that Jesus *just taught* of expecting great rewards for merely meeting expectations. Such is the righteousness of maintaining borders and expecting they are certain to bring clarity.

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