

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 12, 2025



FOREIGN

faith and the challenge of proximity

by Drew Downs

One of the dynamics in this week's gospel, in which Jesus heals a bunch of people, involves the sense of national identity. He wonders aloud when the one person who shows gratitude to God isn't a Hebrew, but a Samaritan. Having read the parable of the Good Samaritan seven chapters ago, we shouldn't see this as Jesus having a problem with this Samaritan. And we probably shouldn't see it as his condemning the Hebrews who showed no obvious gratitude.

We're invited to simply notice the difference. That the one who appreciated the situation more was the one on the outside. The one who didn't expect to receive the grace. Because he didn't see it as owed him.

We should also consider that it was for God that their neighbors cast them out. It was for God that their neighbors felt justified in condemning them to die in the first place. It would be hard to be grateful. Period.

ORDINARY TIME

2025

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!

Keeping the Faith

This week's visitation from the bishop was full of grace and joy. We had a worship service rich with anticipation and gratitude. Bishop Jennifer spoke to us about faith in the midst of struggle. A theme that is as much central to the gospel lessons in the lectionary these late weeks as it is our present lives in these uncertain times. We were reminded in the gospel a couple of weeks ago that if we are faithful in little, we are faithful in much. And now, we're reminded that faith as small as a mustard seed can uproot a mulberry tree and throw it into the sea!

Our bishop bore witness to a community of faith where things are happening, where faith is uprooting the proverbial mulberry trees. And while we may think our job is to move mountains (that's a different mustard seed reference!) our faith, no matter the volume, is enough. Our work, no matter the volume, is faithful. She could see our witness, our faith, our devotion, our love for this community. And we are enough.

I'm as guilty as any in making it seem like this isn't enough. We're trying to move mountains, after all! But that isn't the expression of faith we think it is. No, the faith doesn't stem from the desire to change the world. It comes first in seeing the incredible, improbably love of God in our midst. It grows in us, through our desire for that love to be present and known and shared throughout our neighborhood. To reflect that grace. That is what it means to keep the faith. Always. As a people of deep faith. It just takes some and God can do the rest.

With love,
Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 23C

October 12, 2025

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

Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

When reading a story, sometime the setting is more important than any character. It doesn't just set the scene, it controls it, pushes against the protagonist, and challenges the reader to imagine seeing this scene taking place in any other place. The setting of this week's gospel is that important. It is doing 90% of the work for Jesus.

Jesus has left the crowds behind as he has walked into the borderlands, where no respected Hebrew would go. Our vision of borders as a place of security and order is a modern gloss on a history of chaotic territorial disputes and expectations of lawlessness. People lived in cities for mutual protection through living in proximity to neighbors and sharing of resources. The modern understanding of nation didn't exist.

It is because of this sketchy view of borders, that they became the place people to which people were cast out. A Hebrew that couldn't be a Hebrew couldn't just go be a Samaritan. So guess what? They were forced into a no man's land in between, relegated to a life of constant danger and inhumane conditions, struggling to find food and shelter, and begging for generosity. To survive, people in the borderlands would develop a kind of community, finding neighbors in the same condition. The sort of conditions that we might compare to a tent community of people experiencing homelessness today.

Jesus enters this space where rabbis and Pharisees don't go, endangering his ritual purity and his very life. And he heals several people plagued with leprosy. After he has been challenged by some Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath. And telling his followers about faith as small as a mustard seed. After saying a little doubt is great doubt and a little faith is great faith. He goes to where people of faith send their own to lose every last bit of it. And he restores them to wholeness, in community. This isn't about gratitude, but about the true will of God.

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