



ST. LUKE'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon for the 18th Sunday after Pentecost, Oct. 9, 2022

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene

Ernest Warner

[Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7](#), [Psalm 66:1-11](#), [2 Timothy 2:8-15](#), [Luke 17:11-19](#)

May the grace of God help us to live fully in the community of the faithful, and provide us with the openness and love to bring others into this healing space.

Today I would like to speak to you about borderlands, the places where marginalized people live, set apart for various reasons. Borderlands are created in different forms—political, social, ethnic, and in different places, communities, families, and nations. They are places where people are cast out for being different, not acceptable to portions of society. And there are what we might call personal borderlands, places we hide when we face uncertainties because of illness, loss, or misunderstandings--keeping things within we don't want others to see. What these borderlands have in common is a need of healing and restoration, as they disrupt our relationship with God, our families, our friends, and ourselves. They create times when we feel ungrounded and living in an unfamiliar place.

Much of Jesus' ministries was with people of the borderlands--the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the sick, the lame, the poor—people who were outside of the mainstream of society and looked down upon as “less than.” There were writings and teachings people within the community followed that served to validate these attitudes towards the marginalized. Yet Jesus brought a radical new approach to viewing the law. He taught the primacy of the law is love.

In the gospel story Jesus is traveling through the region between Galilee and Samaria. He enters a village and is greeted by 10 lepers, who keep their distance in deference to their affliction. They are marginalized people, living in the borderlands. They cry out “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Jesus tells them “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” The gospel tells us, “And as they went, they were made clean.”

In those times if a person recovered from leprosy, the law of Moses required them to present themselves to a priest and offer the sacrifice required for the healing. Yet one of the lepers, when he realized he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice and prostrated himself at Jesus' feet, thanking him. This man was a Samaritan, marginalized because of his ethnicity as well as his disease--the law of Moses was not binding on him. Jesus asked him about the others; where are they? “Was none of them found to return and praise God except this foreigner?” Perhaps Jesus said this for the benefit of the Samaritan. The other nine, if they were all Hebrew, were doing what Jesus told them, and what was prescribed by the law of Moses. The Samaritan was able to be more spontaneous in his outpouring of thanksgiving and praise. Jesus says to him “Get up and go on your way, your faith has made you well.” An interesting phrase, “your faith has made you well.” Here is a distressed person, empowered by hope, overcoming his fear, and reaching out from the borderlands to be healed. These words spoken by Jesus appear elsewhere in Luke--in his words to the sinful woman who, during his

dinner with the Pharisee, anointed his feet with her tears and precious ointment. The Pharisee saw her as an outcast, Jesus sees differently. And again, in the woman who was stigmatized and outcast by her bleeding, who secretly reaches out, touches the hem of his robe and is made clean. Both were shunned by society, but both reached out to Jesus who used their acts of faith to make them well.

What do we do when we find ourselves in the borderlands? In Jeremiah God tells the Hebrews who were sent into exile to continue to live their lives and to pray for the welfare of the city where He has sent them. They do not know it, but later He will bring them home. The Psalmist cries out for us to praise God--though He has sorely tried us, He has also brought us to a place of refreshment. Perhaps the borderland is a time when we reach out for healing and wait for the touch that will make us well.

Earlier in Luke, John the Baptist had sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one, or if they should look for another. Jesus told them to go and tell John what they had seen--the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached. Jesus is reaching out to the people of the borderlands and is bringing them home. Jesus sees people for who they are, children of the living God, his eyes are not blinded by the biases and precepts of society. And these people see him, realize that he knows them as people loved by God, opening the door for them to step out of the borderlands and to be made whole.

In the epistle Paul writes how he endures everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also find the salvation of God, "the elect" referring to believers or those who would become believers. I believe this is the work of our church, of our community of faith. And the offerings and activities that our parish and diocese are doing in our communities speaks well of our church. Yet every day it seems that we hear of more borderlands being created, more people being marginalized. There is much to be done and if each one of us does a little, our offerings can grow.

How well we follow the footsteps of Jesus will largely be measured in how well we walk the path of love. In the epistle of John, we find "For this is the message that we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." And as Jesus shows us, this especially includes those who live in the borderlands. Amen.