

## Go and Show Yourself

Alan Claassen

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*Editor's note: The following is a montage of Alan's sermon outline and the readings for the day, interspersed with commentary from this editor. This piece is in no way meant as an attempt to reconstruct the message Alan delivered to the congregation.*

– Sandra Weil

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### Luke 17:11-19

*Words in italics are from Rev Mark Davis, minister of St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, California.*

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

*This verse speaks of the journeying to Jerusalem as something that has already begun and is continued here. But he would first go through Galilee, then Samaria if he's traveling south to Jerusalem. Given the word order, I think the borderland is intended.*

As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

*I like how Luke refers to the ten as leprous men, not lepers. Their humanity is the essential quality of their being and their leprosy is an accidental quality. Showing oneself to the priest was an essential step in being welcomed or permitted back into the community by being declared no longer unclean.*

When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean.

*Showing oneself to the priest was an essential step in being welcomed or permitted back into the community by being declared no longer unclean.*

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."

*The aorist participle [aorist (especially in Greek) an unqualified past tense of a verb without reference to duration or completion of the action] "having risen up," simply puts the action of rising as a condition for the subsequent action of going. This verse introduces yet another term, in addition to "cleansed" and "cured" to signify the Samaritan man's new state of being. I hear that term implying a kind of wholeness that was not there before.*

Thoughts and questions about this passage from Luke:

- Who is untouchable because of their skin?
- How are we untouchable to ourselves?
- Where is the “hidden wholeness” within ourselves?
- Jesus saw the holy within the men with leprosy and spoke directly to their heart so that their faith would help restore them to health.

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Alan told us that he has a new spiritual director, Sister Mary Neill (from whom some of us took an Enneagram workshop recently and who is known for her wit and humor and also her wisdom). Alan said that the first thing Mary did was ask him about his relationship with his parents (which makes sense if you consider that a child experiences his parents as God-like). Alan told her about a time he remembered his Mom offering to stay by his bedside one night when he was ten years old. Alan declined, saying he didn't need her. Then he realized his mistake and called for her to come back, and she did come back! Hearing this story, Mary reminded Alan: “You can always pray to your mother or to someone else, or to the earth, who loves you unconditionally.” She also told him: “Whatever is happening in [your] life right now, is worthy of [your] love.”

Martin Buber in his way invited us to pray to the earth when he said

The world is an irradiation of God, but we can create a shell around that divine spark.  
A holy conversation with heaven on earth hallows us and heals the earth.

One of today's readings was a poem by Derek Walcott called “Love After Love”:

The time will come when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

Alan has “shown himself” and invited us to do the same with the sharing of these readings and these thoughts.

Amen