

Devotional Reflection, Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Proper 28, the week of the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

The Edge is What I Have

Key phrases for reflection from today's Gospel reading:

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' 14 When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean.

You will find the full text of today's reading at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 993)

AM Psalm 101, 109:1-4(5-19)20-30; PM Psalm 119:121-144

Mal. 1:1,6-14; James 3:13-4:12; Luke 17:11-19

Today we celebrate the Feast of . (See below.)

David's Reflections

William Countryman speaks with insight of edges and borders.

The border country connects the "surface" or ordinary reality with its deeper roots. We will imagine it best if we think of the border not as dividing "natural" from "supernatural" or "this world" from "the world to come" or even "creation" from "God," but rather as connecting the "everyday" with the "transcendent." The "transcendent" may as easily be "within" the everyday as beyond or under or over or next to or otherwise "outside" it.*

In today's Gospel, Jesus travels along the border between Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. On the surface, this appears to be a geographical mistake made by a Luke unfamiliar with Palestine, because this would be an east-west sidle that would not take Jesus south toward Jerusalem from Galilee. (It would be akin to going east along the border between Canada and the USA to get to Iowa from

Ontario.) Yet, Luke may be playing loose with geography for theological/literary reasons.

Jesus was a border person. His entire ministry was lived on the edges of his cultural and religious worlds. He associated routinely with those pushed to the edges, the undesirables who were shunned by the religious. In this instance he found on the border people marginalized because of a skin disease. Lepers were unclean and forced to live outside the villages and towns, required to remain at least six feet away from others, and reduced to survival by begging. On the border, these lepers met Jesus and were healed.

Words from a Theodore Roethke poem come to mind today. In his profound lyric, "In a Dark Time," he writes "the edge is what I have."⁺ On the borders of our existence, wherever those borders may be, there we will find Jesus, because in Jesus God pushes the envelope; God in Christ lives on the edges. (See Matthew 25:31-46, the Gospel in Year A for Christ the King Sunday.) We will find the borders of our experience to be, in Countryman's words, not dividing walls but connecting points between the visible and the transcendent worlds. That experience border may be a new life challenge, like divorce or a new vocational challenge, a place of emotional despair, or a new place in spiritual experience. Or, you may find yourself pulled to the borders because of your concern for those about whom no one seems to care, even those others despise and avoid.

The pandemic took us to the borders of illness and death, solitude and isolation, powerlessness and despair. On that boundary, we learned new ways to connect with each other, new ways to worship, and new ways to reach out to others in Christ's name. We were pushed into the hard challenge of waiting. The edge was what we had. As in today's Gospel, Jesus travels that boundary with us seeking our wholeness.

If we find ourselves on a border, on the edge of strange new turf relationally, vocationally, socially, or spiritually, we will find on that border connections to the unseen world of the Spirit of Jesus. Wherever we find ourselves on an edge, a new place of challenge, beyond where we've lived before, there we will find Jesus. Wherever the marginalized, rejected, and despised cower before the rejection of the culture, there we will find Jesus—meeting, embracing, and healing.

May we have the grit to move toward the edges. There we will find Jesus at work and we can join in. “The edge is what I have.”

* L. William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999), p. 11.

+Theodore Roethke, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 231.

Collect of the Day, Proper 28

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 236)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Edmund of East Anglia, king and martyr (died 20 Nov 869 CE).

http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Edmund_EAnglia.htm

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edmund-king-of-East-Anglia>

Collect of the Feast of Edmund of East Anglia

Merciful God, who gave grace and fortitude to Edmund to die nobly for your Name: Bestow on us your servants the shield of faith, with which we can withstand the assaults of our ancient enemy; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

For the Sick

Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve your sick servants, and give your power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that those (*or N., or NN.*) for whom our prayers are offered may be strengthened in *their* weakness and have confidence in your loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and

reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 260)

A Prayer for Light

O Lord God Almighty, as you have taught us to call the evening, the morning, and the noonday one day; and have made the sun to know its going down: Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God and eternal light, living and reigning for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.* (BCP, 101)

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' 14When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean. 15Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' 19Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'

Daily Prayer Offices in The Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Noonday Prayer, p. 103, *Book of Common Prayer*

Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p. 109, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*