

Musing about the space between

By [Tripp Hudgins](#)

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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."

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

~ Luke 17:11-21

There

is a region between home and the forbidden, states a friend and colleague of mine. It's not a border in the NRSV, but a region, an actual space that Jesus goes to. It's where the unwanted are.

Up till this point in the Gospel, Jesus seems to be telling people to be quiet. "Don't tell anyone that I've done this," he seems to say. Then he goes to the region between the place we think of as home and the place we think of as forbidden because the unholy is there and, well, who does he find? People in need of a priest.

So, there's a healing and Jesus tells them to go tell the priests. Then this Samaritan turns to Jesus and thanks him. Jesus says to this person, "It's not me. It's you. It was in you all along."

I love this story. I love that Jesus goes to those in between places and does not say "I have come to bring something you don't have!" He says "Look! It's here, too." Then he sends these same people to the religious institution...not so that they might be indoctrinated. Jesus is sneakier than that. He does it to push the institutions around. The institutions created this in between place, this false place with no priest, no temple, and no religion. Let's shake them loose of this insanity and send them the faithful whom they have shunned...deemed ontologically unclean somehow.

At our regional clergy retreat we spoke of this passage. We shared our various insights and this one came to me during the reflection time. It articulates so clearly my own sense of priestly vocation. I'm not called to go and "make Christians." No. I'm not called to tell the un/non/post-Christian that they are unworthy and must change. No. I am called to stand in that in between place that persists and say to the Church "Over here! God is over here!"

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