

Shake it off (Luke 10:1-11, 16-20)

This life of faith can be a dusty one.

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July 1, 2022

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The last thing I expected to do during yoga class was shake.

Oh, I wobble. I usually totter and quake as I try to stay balanced in a pose. But intentionally shaking my body was not on my list of expected moves for the Saturday morning yoga class held in our church's sanctuary. Guiding us in this movement, our instructor taught us that mammals who have survived an attack in the wild often need to shake their bodies once they regain safety to complete the trauma cycle. That cycle lives in our bodies.

Fight or flight impulses enable quick reactions that can save our lives, but they also leave a heavy dose of adrenaline in our system that needs to be processed. And considering the chronic anxiety many people live with, we're all probably walking around with incompleting trauma responses in our bones and muscles.

Turns out Taylor Swift is right: we literally need to shake it off.

This life of faith can be a dusty one. In Luke 10, I hear Jesus give us permission to consider which dust we let get into the cracks of our shoes and mix with the sweat in our brow and which dust we shake off.

Or, as the NRSV offers, *wipe* off. Wipe?

Many of us know this scene in the Gospels; it's the "shake the dust off" text. This translation that says to "wipe" the dust of the unwelcoming towns off our shoes is a

bit unsatisfying. Jesus permits servants of the reign of God to set some boundaries and not waste energy on unwilling partners. But to wipe the dust off sounds less dramatic, less demonstrative than “shake it off.” We shook our bodies at yoga class. It felt amazing. Now that I have learned that our bodies carry a biological need to move in a way that sets us free from the grip of hormones stirred up by conflict, “wipe” just doesn’t do it for me.

Perhaps this change in translation is an invitation for us to ask: How do we deal with conflict and rejection? Do we long for a dramatic, public reckoning? Do we need a healing tremor/dance party? Or is simply wiping away a failed effort, project, or relationship enough?

When we feel pressed to hide our experiences with rejection in ministry, to say “it’s OK” when it’s not, the voice of Jesus in Luke chapter 10 opens space for us to discuss conflict and rejection freely and clearly. Sometimes people don’t want to come along with you. Sometimes people won’t come back. The grief we feel is real and deserves attention.

I’d wager that many of us are trying to function without completing the cycle of trauma, loss, and grief in parish ministry or in our life of faith. What is left undone in us or in our communities? What has been stirred up that needs resolution? If you’re reading this, there’s a good chance you’re a pastor and you survived the last two-plus years of ministry in a global pandemic. Now what?

For Jesus in Luke 10, the point is that the reign of God has come near. This arrival will shake the very foundations of the cosmos.

As it happens, my yoga teacher is a member of my church whose whole world was shaken by her breast cancer diagnosis three years ago. Yoga and other healing arts have become central to her way of life. She, her wisdom, her story, and her shaking are little outposts of the reign of God to me. She helps me trust that one day, every atom in the cosmos will get to quiver and quake with the joy and healing that Christ brings.