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Healing From the Outside In

Last Saturday, while making our way back from the twin cities, around 10pm our tire blew out. Thanks to Triple A, a salt of the earth tow truck driver, and a patient person behind the wheel who wasn't as anxious as the passenger, we eventually made it to our destination. Later than we expected, we arrived home.

How did you get here? What is your story? There is a mixture of paths that brought us together. Some of us have been Lutherans or at Grace our whole lives, others of us have stumbled in late. Others are still trying to figure out if there is room for us. The life of faith includes the unexpected. Struggles. Things we have to wrestle with, and episodes along the highway that we have reckon with.

I'm often amazed at *destination* events-- and the question "how did you get here?" How long did it take? A week, a month, a redeye overnight? The point is that everyone gets there eventually to participate in whatever event is happening.

These moments also reveal who hasn't made it yet. "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine?" Jesus said. If you are like me, you've read that line as disappointment - but what if instead it was a lament born from deep love and desire for everyone to experience the joy of a community of thanksgiving- all together?

No matter what path you took to get here, how long and winding the journey, where you had to go, or how surprising it is that you are still among us- what counts is the destination. Life with God. Side by side. Elbow to elbow. Hand in hand. We need you. The word of God is unchained and so can hold all the places we have been, and, yes, all of us.

We find ourselves in the border lands. On the way. In motion. Longing for the fulness of the body of Christ.

Religious, cultural, and political identities swirl around in between. Naaman the Syrian, an enemy general must travel beyond himself and out of his own homeland to experience the multitudinous healing that makes him whole. As important and powerful as he is, his healing cannot happen in the safety of a private meeting, or on his own terms. He has to listen to the wisdom of his servant. Submerged seven times in the strange and muddy waters of an unfamiliar river, he is healed from the outside in. Skin disease gone and his heart cracked open. He is

included in what the God of Israel has been about the whole time. Drawing the circle wider. Extending the table.

I don't know where you will have to go, what perils unknown we will be called to walk through: but one thing I know. We believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ and so we will never go alone!

Ten lepers are cleansed by Jesus in-between Samaria and Galilee, yet only one returns to give thanks to God. The foreigner. The stranger. The one healed from the outside in. Still Jesus longs for all ten to experience the joy of community. Outsiders and insiders, foreigners and locals, all around one long table. No matter where they had to go, or what end around or detour they must take, what else they had to experience- Jesus just wants them together.

We live in such a fractured world. We long for reunions yet so often our lament seems to bounce off the ceiling back to our heart. Eventually it goes silent- turning to sighs too deep for words. There are so many things that feel impossible. Yet, we proclaim the God of the cross and the empty tomb. The one who came among us as the stranger and foreigner- despised- rejected- submerged all the way down into death itself. This one stretched his arms wide enough to embrace all this world- from the outside in. The crucified one rose again. Declaring that nothing can separate you or anyone from this love and that in the fullness of time-- there will be no one on the outside- for God insists on bringing everyone in. We belong to this God.

Nearly every day, there is a group of people who gather outside the Broadview Immigration Detention Center. They either celebrate the Eucharist outside the facility or process with the consecrated bread and wine from somewhere else. Their goal is to bring the body of Christ inside and commune those who are there. So far they have been stopped from doing so. Who has brought you the body of Christ? In word or touch and took you from the outside in? Embrace.

Joined to the stranger- submerged in his death we share in his resurrection with each new day. Rising from the muddy waters of our Jordan River, we notice who is not here. We lament, share, tell the truth, pray, proclaim, build a longer table, amplify the shouts of the foreigner, walk with Namaan, listen to those we often talk over, and risk love. Reaching out and using all our testimony, those things we have seen, to make space for others. As Pastor Kevin Vandiver said-- we don't push people away- we lift them up. (Thanks to Pastor Vandiver for this quote and his insight about God working from the "outside in.")

God is on the move, working from the outside- in. Welcoming us home no matter how we got here. Our community is still growing around this eucharistic assembly. Thanks be to God.

