

Making the Road: *Walking through Lent*

WEEK 4: WALKING WITH OTHERS

written by
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Sunday, March 27 ☞ Luke 4:14-19

In the late 1960s, White Australians grew increasingly aware of the impact their country's racism and colonialism had on the lives of Aboriginal people. These White Australians began approaching Aboriginal people, asking "How can I help you? What do you want?" Aboriginal activists grew frustrated, recognizing persisting colonial biases and attitudes in these offers of support. Activist Lilla Watson responded with a challenge: "If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

As we make this road through Lent, we must recognize Jesus' call to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. We are Jesus' hands in this mission, but we must also recognize how we ourselves are poor, held captive, blind, and bound by systems of oppression.

The corrections officer shackling the prisoner must emotionally distance himself from this soul-sucking work. By depriving himself of emotion, he is dehumanized within a system that dehumanizes others.

The straight, cisgender teenager is free to use his assigned restroom without harassment, but they are also trapped in a binary world that shames diverse bodies and identities.

The wealthy executive with a nice suburban home where her kids can attend the best schools is segregated from neighbors trapped in urban food deserts, enduring long commutes on public transportation. Generational inheritance, real estate redlining, drug "wars" targeting Black and Brown communities, and White supremacy have benefited the executive while oppressing others. But she is also trapped — deprived of truth and the rich wisdom diversity offers.

No matter our economic status, identity, race, or religion, we are all bound by systems of oppression. As we walk with Jesus this Lent, let us make this road with others, partnering in the work of mutual liberation.

God of the captives, help us recognize our need for liberation and value the salvation Jesus offers. Help us make this road with those whose liberation is bound up with ours. Amen.

Monday, March 28 ☞ Luke 6:32-36

In her book *All About Love*, bell hooks writes about the dangers of "dominator" culture where superiors trump inferiors and conversations become competitive debates. Much of hooks' work is grounded in an ethic of love, lived out through care, commitment, respect and knowledge. "The choice to love," hooks writes, "is the choice to connect — to find ourselves in the other." Approaching our enemies with an ethic of love, maintaining a radical openness, allows each person the chance to be heard and values every voice for their unique perspective. Grounding our road in this ethic of love leads to personal and social transformation.

Merciful God, let us behave as children of the Most High. Help us to walk this road with our enemies, seeking to love, not dominate. Amen.

Tuesday, March 29 ☞ Luke 7:36-50

Jesus loves and forgives the woman forever condemned by others, accepting her confession and welcoming her faith. After this encounter, will this woman's community accept her and welcome her back? Or is this grace offered only from Jesus? As we make this road through Lent, we undoubtedly walk with sinners shunned by society as irredeemable. Some are seen as "wrong" by those of us whose lives fit neatly into our culture's mold. Who do you know who could benefit from a word of welcome or a new chance? Who is begging for grace from God because they cannot find it among us?

Welcoming God, forgive our lack of forgiveness and grace. Help us welcome and love the sinners at Jesus' feet. Amen.

Wednesday, March 30 ☩

Luke 10:25-36

Although his identity is unknown, Jesus' audience would have assumed the robbers' victim was Jewish. The Samaritan's help shatters expectations, defying a longstanding enmity between Jews and Samaritans. As we make this road through Lent, we travel with people of various ethnic identities and religious traditions, people who appreciate Jesus but do not worship him as Messiah and Savior. These fellow travelers are still our neighbors. We are to walk with them as partners in good, merciful work. Jesus calls us to make roads that break from the familiar fault lines of human borders and biases, roads that all can travel safely.

Eternal God who moves beyond all boundaries and borders, help us make our road safe and welcoming for all our neighbors. Amen.

Thursday, March 31 ☩ Luke 17:11-19

Entering a village, Jesus is met by ten lepers banished to the margins of their community. They were the unseen, the problem-ridden, the diseased who knew to keep their distance from Jesus while they cried out for recognition. Along our road are marginalized people calling to us — those victimized and oppressed, those sidelined by mental illness or addiction. What happens to the soul of a traveler who consistently passes by without acknowledging their humanity? Jesus offers those who approach and engage the lepers the same healing that he gifts to the sick men. When we humanize others, we humanize ourselves as well.

God of us all, we cry out to Jesus to heal us and set us free from actions that demean and dehumanize. Amen.

Friday, April 1 ☩ Luke 18:35-43

In classic literature, the blind are often portrayed as people of inner wisdom, prophets who can “see” more clearly than the sighted. The blind man Jesus met along the road to Jericho knew the Son of David was approaching and had the power to heal. This encounter occurs after the disciples are told explicitly who Jesus is and what will happen to him, but they do not understand. As we walk this road through Lent, what can we see through the eyes of those whose abilities and lives are vastly different than ours? How might your path, or your church's path, change if you viewed the journey through another's eyes?

Son of David, have mercy on us and help us to see. Amen.

Saturday, April 2 ☩ Luke 21:1-4

Money and privilege are seductive, skewing our perspective of both poverty and abundance. The wealthy gift-givers would be well served to spend time with the poor widow. They could volunteer at the homeless shelter, screen clients at the non-profit agency helping with utility bills or serve food at the soup kitchen. To be among the poor, to share a meal and get to know their stories is a liberating practice. The poor widow has much to give. Her sacrificial generosity has the power to transform lives.

Lead us, God, alongside the poor so we can be liberated from the seductive, skewed perspective of wealth and privilege. Help us recognize the way our liberation is bound to the poor. Amen.

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