

First Sunday of Lent  
February 21, 2021  
Transgressive Confidence  
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Last Sunday's gospel was also pulled from the first chapter of Mark—the last story in a fast-moving and wonderfully exciting introduction to Jesus. By its end, the itinerant preacher has both a following and a reputation for curing the diseased and casting out demons. In the last story, a leper breaks quarantine to kneel at the feet of Jesus. His criminal action oozes faith. “If you choose,” he prays, “you can make me clean.” I admire his transgressive confidence in the healing power of God's own Son.

Mark says this man's transgression touches Jesus to the heart. Full of empathy for this man, Jesus ignores the line of protection and stretches towards the man and touches his leprosy, his wound. “I do choose,” the kind Savior says. “Be made clean.” Friends, sisters, brothers, Lent seeks this wounded encounter for us, ourselves on the cusp of crossing the lines of our yearlong quarantine. May we become so emboldened to beg Christ so transgressively! We need healing.

The flood that put Noah and his family in the ark was the result of a forty-day and forty-night rain, but they remained in the ark for over a year once the rain stopped. O what can happen in a year's time! For us at King's, the end of in-person classes in the middle of last spring and at the end of the semester last fall, Zoom and Teams, the postponement of graduation for the class of 2020, masks, surveillance, social distancing, hybrid classes, and the cancellation of sports. For us as a country, the death of George Floyd, a summer of protests for racial justice, the election of a new president, insurrection at the Capitol, impeachment, vaccinations, and so much death around the world. How touched Noah's family must have been when finally stepping from the boat, God offered them a new covenant and promise and a rainbow of hope across the sky. How will it be for us when the sickness and death of the coronavirus is finally halted? The forty days of Lent and the fifty days of Easter invite our reflection. What will have come of the virus and what will have come of us by May 23, the day of Pentecost?

The Spirit drove Jesus out into his forty-day wilderness which is the model for Lent. Perhaps we are not yet ready to claim the Spirit's movement in ourselves. But let us assume Jesus's position of prayer this Lent. Let us grieve all whom we have lost and all that has been taken from us. Let us prepare to cross the line of our quarantine with a transgressive confidence in God and his plan for the reign of God on earth. Let us learn from the man first-known only as leper who, at the touch of Jesus, became a Spirit-filled evangelizer, responsible for an increase of faith, hope, and love among the people of his time. May it so be said of us at Pentecost that we are reborn with a clear conscience to reboot the world with our renewed confidence in God's happy plan for all creation! Be made clean.