My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Our Lord God of our grateful hearts, minds, Spirits, and souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

One of the most fascinating words in the English language, for me, is the word *liminal*. When we are in a liminal place, we occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold. We’re seemingly past the first step but not yet at the next one. We’re in the middle of things, not quite looking back but also not quite looking forward, either.

In this week’s Gospel text, Jesus is on his way to meet his fate on the cross in Jerusalem. Luke says Jesus is “between Samaria and Galilee.” But there’s a problem with that location, because unlike the walls, fences, and dividers in the West Bank today, back in Biblical times there was nothing there. It’s just a fancy way of saying that Jesus is at the border.

I grew up in a town that was settled at the confluence of three counties: Boulder, Adams, and Weld. This made for a lot of unusual bedfellows. Boulder County had good schools and was wealthy as home to the University of Colorado and a lot of high tech investment. So if you lived in that side of town, things were alright. Adams County was poorer, and the fire districts made so that if you lived on a farm the fire trucks reached you in about 20 minutes from the time you called. And Weld County? It literally extends to the Wyoming border some 60 miles north. So if one lived close to Broomfield, but not quite in Boulder County, you lived in Pony Estates, a wealthy bunch of houses with horse farms. But come winter, even though they were within spitting distance of the Boulder County Line, it would often take a week or more to get a snowplow out to where you lived. I’m telling you all of this because life at a border is complex and waaay different than we might experience here in Greenland. And liminal spaces, borders, and lines, have implications for us in our lives.

Now, Jesus meets folks in liminal space of a border. Ten men approach and ask him to have mercy on them. They are lepers seeking healing, and they too are at a border, but not a geographic one: they’re at the border between clean and unclean. They don’t want to be on the ritually unclean side—they want, they need, to be healed. They are tired of being separated from family and friends with this stigma. And then Jesus shows up.

These lepers know who Jesus is and what he could do for them: they call him “Master”. Jesus and the lepers are at this threshold where everything could change—where the lepers themselves believe things will change. Maybe they know that Jesus is all about the liminal, that he likes being in the borderlands. Jesus seems to be all about crossing boundaries, both physical, theological and theoretical. He is willing to cross another one to heal these ten men.

Jesus tells the lepers to go and see the priest, and then they are healed as they went. They’re ecstatic. They are no longer in the liminal space; they are now in a new space, of restoration and acceptance. This should end the story, but we get a little bit more information. One man, a Samaritan, comes running back to thank Jesus. This is odd to Jesus. There were ten men, so why did only one guy come back to say thanks?

We don’t know why the other nine don’t return to see Jesus. We do know that this one man realizes something has changed. As a Samaritan, he would have known a lot about borders. We’ve talked about Samaritans and how they were viewed. Remember? (take all answers). Ok, then. So the Samaritan knows all about what it means to be on the other side of a border, and now he knows that things have dramatically changed. He knows what it means to be on the outside, and now he is crossing into a new liminal space where he is whole. So he gives thanks.

We live in a time when people want to put up walls on our various literal and figurative borders. These borders are supposed to determine who is on the right side and who isn’t. We don’t want to mix things up; we’d rather not live in a liminal state. Citizens here, immigrants there. Democrats here and Republicans there. Patriots fans here, Bills fans there. We don’t want to be on the threshold of anything. We want things and people in their proper places. We have fought wars over this. Passed legislation over this. The question is whether we are repeating laws of the 1960s or 1890s. Liminal spaces.

In my growing up in Broomfield, the spaces were also not marked explicitly. But the white collar folks lived in Boulder County; the working class, in Adams County. And the poorest folks, Pony Estates excepted, lived out in the fields of Weld County. Tenant farming was still a thing when I went to school. And it wasn’t pretty. Liminal spaces were present, enforced by social mores and the tacit rules of real-estate. All the kids knew it.

Being at the threshold, or the frontier is something Jesus was familiar with. In this passage he is on his way to Jerusalem, where he will suffer and die. Each stop along the way is part of a process, a process that brings him closer and closer to a moment when everything will change. Jesus is living the liminal.

I want to leave you with these final thoughts.

Jesus has always been at borders, at the threshold. It seems to be where Christ is found. What about us? Where are we? Are we willing to live at the border? Today there are people who are forced like the lepers to live in a separate land where they are alone. Is God calling us to cross a boundary, to be willing to live in the liminal in order to bring healing?

Broomfield, by the way, formed its own City and County by special act of the legislature. People don’t want to remember the days of the liminal space anymore. But at my class reunions, it’s still there. Because the kids knew it then, and the adults still live it now. Know what I’m talking about? When will the healing begin to sink in, and who are we telling about it?

Thanks be to God,

Amen.