



**TOUCH
THE
EARTH**

Poems on The Way

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TOUCH THE EARTH

Luke 9:1-2

My father says more with his hands than he does with his lips. I cannot
recall him

sitting me down

to teach me about love, but I watched him tend to my mother
as cancer spread through her insides.

He cried when her breath left her, though he never lectured me about grief.

I am still grieving my mother,
still
gleaning what my father taught me.

Gather it from memory.

Let it touch the earth.

TAKE NOTHING

Luke 9:3-4

I have nothing to take anyway.
Life has been a game of learning to navigate

this world without much in my bag.
I was taught to brag about our resourcefulness.

The way the coarse hands of our mothers stitch together
clothing and stories out of what was garbage

is the stuff of gods. All things new.
Our mantra—*poor in possessions but rich in family.*

Common understanding: *we all we got.*
Warm up a pot. Pull up a chair.

SHAKE THE DUST

Luke 9:5-6

It is never easy to forget.
The conscience is not so forgiving.
It must be made of cling wrap—
getting stuck to anything
it contacts.

I learned a trick:
store it in the freezer
to reduce its clinginess.
But isn't that its power?
The way it can't shake anything?
The way everything sticks?

IN THEIR GARDEN

Luke 9:7-9

*You can kill a revolutionary,
but you can never kill the revolution.*

FRED HAMPTON

And the truth is
they can never
put us down.

Like weeds in their garden.

Pull us out
and we will
pop up again.

Dead dandelion.
Seedhead floating through the air.
Falling to the ground.

HOUSE OF HUNTING, HOUSE OF THE HUNTER

Luke 9:10

*The soul is like a wild animal—tough, resilient, savvy,
self-sufficient and yet exceedingly shy.*

PARKER J. PALMER, *A HIDDEN WHOLENESS*

I run here when I am hunted.

Camouflage amongst the cedars.

Keep quiet with the doe.

Hold my breath. Wipe my sweat

Before it hits the leaves below.

On the hunt, I run here.

First crash, then tiptoe.

Wait for its emergence.

Spot its shape in the shadows.

Afraid of what might lurk there.

SILENCE DISRUPTED

Luke 9:11

Pop worked long hours,
so the weekend was a haven for him—

the length of Saturday spent in the cave
of his bedroom.

Tiger Woods hitting drives down the center of the green
on the TV screen.

A bag of Hot Cheese Curls
already half-eaten.

I could hear him drifting in and out of sleep,
as snores vibrated the hallway walls.

The voice that we all have
whispered on the inside:

He'd rather not be bothered

But like the shot heard 'round the world
I would burst through the doorway,

plopping my body next to his
lying sideways across the bed.

That's when he said
How's it going, bud?

And I knew I was welcome
to settle in.

WE FEED EACH OTHER

Luke 9:12-17

“It’s still that black abundance?” I asked LaThon.

“You already know.”

KIESE LAYMON, *HEAVY*

*There isn’t enough to go around—
the engine that drives our way of life.*

We’ve been sold this narrative, and bought it
at the open-air market of neoclassical economics.

Scarcity.
The limited availability of a commodity.

Five loaves and two fish
will only get you so far.

But we were taught *ujamaa*
before we internalized the empire’s mantra.

Blessing and breaking
what little we have.

LEFTOVERS

Luke 9:17

Never show up to the cookout
or slide through the fish fry
without some Tupperware in hand.

You won't want to miss
the blessing of these leftovers
for days on end.

The best hosts always provide
take home containers.

Take as much as you want, child.

There's plenty to go around.

STREETS IS TALKING

Luke 9:18-21

After Jay-Z's "Streets Is Talking"

Know this:
people will talk.

They will form opinions
and rehearse them to strangers
as known fact.

I sat in the back of my brother's Mazda 929.
The *Dynasty* album flooding my ten-year-old ears.
Jay-Z's inquisitive lyrics:

*Is he a Blood, is he Crip?
Is he that, is he this?*

I listened to find out
for myself.

CRAZY TALK

Luke 9:22

I.

What I say only sounds crazy
to those who have paid no attention.
The powers that be
are as predictable as the seasons.
With them it is no secret:
when they have pegged you as a threat
you might as well have signed your death warrant.

II.

What I say only sounds crazy
to those who have paid no attention.
Their party or position is of little account:
 challenge their power,
 ruffle their feathers,
 rouse the people to dream for better,
they will collude to take you out.

III.

What I say only sounds crazy
to those who have paid no attention.
Watch the seasons—how winter changes to spring.
Has death ever truly been an end?
Resurrection sounds far-fetched
until you observe the crocus each year,
and the fact that we, as a people, are even still here.

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