

**FEBRUARY 11, 2018  
EPIPHANY 6  
EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS**

**CHANGE OF PLANS: GOING UP COUNTRY**

**First Reading ~ Mark 1:40-45**

A person with leprosy approached Jesus, knelt down and begged, "If you are willing, you can heal me." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out a hand, touched the person with leprosy and said, "I am willing. Be cleansed."

Immediately the leprosy disappeared, and the person with the disease was cured. Jesus gave a stern warning and sent the person off. "Not a word to anyone," Jesus said. "Go off and present yourself to the priest and make an offering for your healing as Moses commanded, as a testimony to the religious authorities."

But the person who had been healed went off and began to proclaim the whole matter freely, making the story public. As a result it was no longer possible for Jesus to enter a town openly, and Jesus stayed out in the country, in lonely places. Even so, people kept coming to him from all directions.

**Second Reading ~ from The Collected Sermons of Fred Craddock**

Some years ago I was invited to speak at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Joe Roberts is the pastor but it is known as the church of Martin Luther King Sr. and Jr. At the time of the sermon one of the associates introduced me simply by name and said that Rev. Craddock will read his own text. And I got up to do just that. It was Mark 1, and I had begun to read when the pastor, Joe Roberts, seated nearby, began to hum. But that's all right, I can use a little humming. And then he began to sing, and it interfered with the flow of my words. And then the associates on the platform began to sing. The instrumentalists went to their instruments, a guitar and drums and organ and piano, and they began and people were singing. I'm standing there in the middle of my text. The people began to sing from all over that auditorium and I thought, well, I'm the one up front, I must be the leader, so I began to clap my hands and they began to stand and sway and sing. It was a great time; the song was "I Feel Much Better Now That I've Laid My Burdens Down." It was a grand moment and then Joe said, "Yes" and everybody sat down. I continued the reading, I had my sermon, and afterwards I said to Dr. Roberts, "You got me off doing that. I didn't know you were going to do that." And he said, "I didn't know I was going to do that." And so I asked him then why he did it. He said, "When you stood up to preach, one of the associates leaned over to me and said, 'That boy's going to need some help.'"