

Bible Study
Proper 9, Year C
July 3, 2016

[RCL] 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; Galatians 6:(1-6) 7-16 Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

2 Kings 5:1-14

How many times do we bring our own agenda's to God's work, like Naaman did? How often do we think we know better than the prophets? I can really relate to Naaman and his need to have all the pomp and circumstance; to have Elisha, the man of God, come out and call on the name of God and wave his hands over Naaman. How could it have been as simple as to go and wash in the river Jordan? He could have bathed in Aram, where the water was better. After paying ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments to the king of Israel, that was it? Didn't Elisha realize who Naaman was? Didn't he realize that Naaman was a powerful warrior and the commander of Aram's army?

I can also relate to the King of Israel who tore his clothes in frustration over the perceived "trick". He didn't even think to send Naaman to Elisha for healing, but rather assumed the king of Aram was picking a fight with Israel. Often we fail to see God's work in the world and in our own lives; we jump to conclusions and fail to give others the benefit of the doubt. This happens when our minds set on earthly things rather than on the things of God.

- When have you stood in God's way?
- What can we learn from the story of Naaman, the King of Israel and the man of God?

Psalm 30

Like the Psalmist, we exalt God for all that God has done for us. God lifts us up and restores our health and life. God's favor endures a lifetime! But what about the times when we don't see God's face; when it seems hidden? We're filled with fear, as the Psalmist laments. And then, by God's mercy, our wailing is turned into dancing. In this Psalm, I am reminded of God's ever-present love and favor. It is only my own inability to see God that makes it seem like God has turned God's face from me. But my health and my very life are precious gifts from God who is worthy of exaltation and praise. My Lord, my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

- When have you been unable to see God working in your life?
- How might we be more present to God's presence in our lives?

Galatians 6:(1-6)7-16

When Paul says "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" he reminds us that issues of the spirit do not depend on mere rules or external appearances. What God is calling us to in Christ Jesus is to become new creations. What might it look like if we were created anew? God calls us to stop persecuting or even hassling others because of their outward appearance or practices. God calls us to be more focused on our spiritual selves and less focused on our physical selves. God calls us to be more concerned with helping people rather than judging them. Paul calls us to be that new creation through Christ Jesus. He says that he will only ever boast in the cross of Christ. Can we say that, too?

- What might it look like if we were created anew?
- How do you concern yourself with helping people rather than judging them?

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

In this Gospel lesson, Jesus teaches his disciples how to carry out their ministry. He tells them to go in peace, to greet people, receive their hospitality, to heal, and proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom. He also tells them how to respond when their peace is not reciprocated. Jesus explains that whoever listens to them listens to him, and whoever rejects them rejects him, and whoever rejects him rejects the One who sent him. Jesus grants his disciples authority over all the power of the enemy. In his name they are able to make spirits submit to them. Jesus also admonishes them to rejoice, not in the submission of the spirits, but rather that their names are written in heaven.

- What does this lesson have to say about your own ministry?
- How do you approach the work God has given me to do?
- How do you respond when you encounter hardship in my ministry?

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