

A Narrative 9, 2014
2 Kings 5:1-14
Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

Well, this is the perfect text for a healing service, right? And what an absolutely fantastic text for All Saints Sunday, right? No? Well I think so. Here's why:

What is God up to in this story? Healing, of course. Healing Naaman. Naaman the Syrian. Naaman the leper. Naaman the commander of the army that has seen Israel as a threat. Naaman who keeps Hebrew slaves. Of course that's who God heals. And think what that says about God.

In this story, God heals just because God wills healing. And God did not require the ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments that Naaman and the king of Aram seemed to think they'd need to purchase healing. God did not require a prophet to intervene with loud supplications and foolish wand-waving. God did not even require faith. God just heals. No prerequisites. No intermediary. God just heals.

And although God doesn't *require* anything, that doesn't stop God from working through people along the way. Enter the saints. A saint, by definition, is someone set apart by God for a specific work. In this story, there are several saints.

Saint #1: Naaman himself. We are told that by Naaman, God gave victory to Aram. Syria. God is at work in the world, and God uses a non-believer to give victory to a country that is not Israel. God uses a leper – someone unclean by Hebrew standards. God will not be limited by the boundaries that we draw around ourselves. And God transforms Naaman. Cures him physically, brings him to faith, draws humility out of his arrogance. And God sends him back to his own country, and Naaman brings with him some Israel-dirt so that he could continue to worship the God who healed him. Naaman did the work of God, was transformed by God, and became a light among the Gentiles. Naaman was a saint, set apart for the work of God.

Saint #2, the slave girl. Here, too, we have God working good out of a bad situation. This girl was stolen from her homeland of Israel in a raid. She was a slave serving Naaman's wife. She was young. She was female. She was insignificant enough to not even warrant a name in the story. But look what God did through her! She has the temerity to approach her mistress and suggest that the prophet from her home country could heal Naaman. It is her voice that starts the cascading events that culminate with not only Naaman's healing, but God's foothold in a foreign land. Her voice. No name, no voice in society. But her voice changed everything because she spoke up. Saint slave girl.

Saint #3: Elisha the prophet. I think my favorite part of Elisha's part of this story is that Elisha isn't even in it. Healing leprosy. Pfthth. Doesn't this guy understand that God will just do that without me? Go tell him to wash in the Jordan. Saint Elisha: doing the work of God without doing anything.

Look how God works. God works through unclean non-believers. God works through the lowest of the low in society. God works through God's chosen. God works through water.

This is God's story. But in these saints, in this healing, can you see God's story reflected in your own story?

Has someone you didn't expect, someone you didn't even like, served you? Done the work of God for you? Spoken God's word to you?

Have you served someone you disagree with? Someone you really dislike? Someone who stands in polar opposition to you? Have you spoken God's word of healing?

Has someone you didn't even notice before spoken or acted boldly for the sake of someone else? Have you?

Has God healed you, despite your protests, despite, well, everything? Have you experienced the healing waters of God even without a cure?

And how little God asks of us! “Go and wash and be clean!”

Unlike your salvation, which God undertook on the cross without asking for your permission or even your participation, in healing, God partners with you. Though God requires nothing, just like with the saints, God invites you to be a participant in your own healing: Go and wash and be clean. Go to your doctor; that’s what I put her there for. She’s the saint for you now, so do what she tells you. Go and wash and be clean. Pray with someone, meditate, so I can heal your spirit. Worship with your community and serve your neighbor, so I can heal your heart. Go and wash and be clean.

God heals. And although God doesn’t require any sacrifice, God invites you into the process, and God surrounds you with people God has called and set apart for a specific work with you. And God puts you in the lives of others so you can be a saint for them, working the work of God, speaking the comforting, healing word of God. You are God’s saints. Through you, God heals your neighbor. Through your neighbor, God heals you.

Naaman’s story is God’s story of healing and calling saints. And your story is God’s story of healing and calling saints. Today we are thankful for God’s healing and for God’s saints in our lives, doing God’s work for us. And today we listen again for God’s call to be the saints for others, doing God’s work for them. Doing God’s work in the world.

Amen