

Naaman – Short Meditation to 2 Kings 5: 8-14

Bible Text:

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.¹ Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.² She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."³ So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said.⁴ And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."⁵ He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments.⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy."⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel."⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house.¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean."¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!¹² Are not Abana and Parpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage.¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean?'"¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Naaman – a well-known politician in Damascus, a statesman, second person after the king, minister of defence and foreign affairs, commander-in-chief of the king's army... successful in warfare – especially against the Israelites...

Naaman was a powerful man!

Everybody in the country knew him.

And nobody had the faintest idea that Naaman himself was in trouble. In great trouble!

Naaman suffered from leprosy.

When Naaman told his king, the king was of course shocked.

The king was willing to invest all there was: power, influence, money, connections – to save his "right hand".

And one day, out of all people, a young slave girl who served Naaman's wife, said to her mistress: "If only Naaman was with the prophet who is in Samaria, the prophet could surely cure him..."

This girl had been brought as a captive from Israel. She was an enemy.

And Naaman was not just her enemy but her oppressor, the man responsible for keeping her a prisoner of war...

This girl must have had a big heart... must have been full of sympathy and humanity. And one day she found the courage to speak out what she'd thought for some time already.

"In my home country", she said, "he could be helped.

In my home country Elisha, God's chosen prophet cures and helps so many..."

Miss Nobody speaks to the commander-in-chief... about her home, her belief, her God.

Had Naaman and his wife not been so desperate, they wouldn't have listened. That's for sure.

How could the second man in state listen to the advice of a foreign slave girl?

However, Naaman's hopelessness and despair must have already brought him to the point of being open and willing to try just anything...

Naaman's health became a state affair.

With a letter to take with him, Naaman packed his things: servants, horses, chariots and lots of riches...

When Naaman arrived at the Israelite court, the king of Israel was immediately terrified. This was going to bring along trouble...

King and people were horrified.

Then a message came from Elisha, the prophet:

"Let this foreigner come to me."

And again: it nearly wouldn't have worked, if Naaman's servants, just as the slave girl before, hadn't interfered. What happened in the story is that Naaman began listening to the ordinary people and doing the unusual and unspectacular little thing.

He must have learned a lot by listening to slave girls and servants, travelling unimportant roads, trusting invisible prophets and washing in a comparatively small country stream.

It is the small things that changed Naaman's life... means and possibilities beyond power and world politics!

He understood that the ordinary people have smart ideas, that the simple thing will do... that the unspectacular action in one of the smallest parts of the world has enormous success... Such experience changed Naaman's mind, helped him see the living God – God in the words of a slave girl, in the advice of the unseen prophet, in the loving care & courage of his servants...

After having washed in the Jordan Naaman had his eyes opened for those sides of life which till then he'd never taken in or found important: he could see the young slave girl with new eyes, respect his servants, listen to the peasants, appreciate the strange river, trust others, and learn that it does not always have to be him, who is in control. This is wholeness in our story.

The beginning of reconciliation between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, Damascus and Israel...!

A healed and changed Naaman has the power to heal the society of his day. He can bring about liberation, justice and peace. Healing of an individual has consequences for the community. Communication with and respect for the ordinary people can lead to the healing of the nations...

An interesting thought in these times of a pandemic...