

## The Reverend Marjo Anderson

1-Narrative Lectionary 9 – All Saints Sunday  
2 Kings 5:1-15a; Matthew 8:1-3

4 November 2018  
Salem, Bridgeport

### “Trust and Obey”

Have you ever been in a situation in which your life felt totally out of your control?

Maybe you were failing a course at school.

Maybe you were laid off at work.

Maybe you were facing bankruptcy or foreclosure.

Maybe your spouse wanted a divorce.

Maybe you were experiencing symptoms of illness

but the doctors hadn't yet discovered what was wrong with you.

Maybe your elderly parent needed more care than you could provide or they could afford.

Maybe you lost a loved one and just can't seem to get over your grief.

Such situations can be overwhelming and we can find ourselves feeling pretty desperate.

Certainly that must have been the case for the 2 people in our readings for today –

the 2 people who had leprosy –

for back in Bible times before antibiotics,

not only was there was no cure, but the disease was assumed to be highly contagious.

And so, not only did leprosy wreck your body, it also wrecked the rest of your life.

Naaman's stature and power in the community, it seemed,

had offered him some protection against being cast out of home and work thus far,

but who knew how long that would last.

He must have been absolutely terrified.

Enter the young girl who had been taken in a human trafficking raid on Israel

and forced into slavery in Naaman's house.

Instead of rejoicing in her captor's suffering, she does as her religious training has taught her,

loving her enemy and praying and working for his welfare.

She tells him to go see the prophet Elisha.

And while Naaman was desperate enough to go to Israel for help, he doesn't do what the girl has told him to do.

Naaman is used to having power, so instead of going directly to some no-name prophet,

he does things his own way and goes for a king-to-king approach.

He has his king write a letter to Israel's king,

and he takes with him plenty of money and gifts to pay for his healing.

When he gets there, the king of Israel doesn't heal him, or bring in anyone to heal him,

but ends up sending him to the very person the servant girl had said.

Again, Naaman tries wielding his power,

offering the prophet money and gifts so that the prophet will heal him,

but again he meets resistance.

Elisha won't even come out of his house.

He just sends a servant out to tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan River 7 times.

The Jordan River?

By this time, Naaman has had it. The Jordan River isn't even a river! It's just a muddy little stream!

Why in the heck should he wash in a dirty creek?!

But once again a person of low rank speaks up

and challenges him with a “What do you have to lose?” speech.

So here is what I find so fascinating about this passage.

Naaman is desperate for healing and I'm sure has been praying his heart out for it.

God responds by sending people and circumstances into his life

which can lead him to exactly that which he seeks,

but the people and circumstances God sends are not the kind he expects.

Naaman expects kings and generals and flashy prophets.

Naaman expects awesome displays of healing power.

Naaman expects there to be lots of money involved.

Instead God sends three unnamed people –

a young female victim of human trafficking doing forced labor, a messenger, and an attendant –  
there's no money or gifts or payment involved,

and the cure seems absolutely silly – a 7-fold dip in a muddy creek.

It's not what Naaman expected, but it's what God provided, and it was enough.

I don't know about you, but there are some things in my life that feel pretty overwhelming sometimes.

And I'm sure that there are things here at church that we may all find pretty overwhelming at times, also.

Sometimes when we are feeling desperate,

we may find ourselves looking for the quick fixes, the big answers, the flashy solutions,

but just like Naaman we may not always be looking in the right places

or going about things in the right way.

Sometimes when we are feeling overwhelmed, we may feel like giving up,

but if that's the case, then we need to pay attention to this story.

Some of you may feel like the challenges facing us are too tough

and we no longer have the resources to overcome them

but what this story reminds us of

is that it doesn't take the world's power or wealth to accomplish God's will.

All it takes is for us to trust and obey.

Naaman's trust wasn't perfect,

but it was enough to get him from the slave girl to the king to the messenger to the attendant to the Jordan.

Each time he doubted or balked, there was someone God sent to encourage him to obey.

The same is true for us.

Our trust is not ever going to be perfect either, but it doesn't have to be.

It just has to be enough to get us from one point to the next – one step at a time.

Our job is to live out our faith the way the slave girl did –

to be the people that God has called us to be, and to do the things that God calls us to do.

And when we do what God calls us to do,

God will be continue to provide us the resources we need to continue to do what God calls us to do.

Today's story is a story of hope and promise.

Naaman sought healing and through a whole host of small little interventions, God provided it.

Whatever it is that we seek –

whatever things feel out of our control, whatever things weigh on us,

whatever things cause us to feel overwhelmed or desperate –

know that God is even now at work to provide for our need.

And as God sends people and situations and answers into our lives –

all we need to do is to trust and obey. **Amen**