

"It is A Great Word" (2nd Kings 5:1-14)

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Introduction: God's *Modus Operandi* Really Hasn't Changed

- A. God took on flesh! "I mean *really!*" says the skeptic or even the so-called "believer" harboring serious doubts.**
- B. Greek thought viewed this as degrading to the spiritual realm. Divinity would essentially be contaminated!**
- C. Jewish thought considers the man who was hung on a tree as a curse!**
- D. This raises some cognitive dissonance to say the least. Consider for example 1st Corinthians 1:18-25.**
- E. Consider how Isaiah presents Messiah/Christ: Isaiah 53:2: "*he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*"**
- F. And what was the reaction of men toward him?**
- G. Answer: Isaiah 53:3: "*He was despised and rejected by me...*"**
- H. So this is how the Lord once came...consider now how He comes today...**
- I. In very similar plain, ordinary, unimpressive, easy-to-despise manner!**
- J. In a way that does not entertain, or stimulate, or impress, or "wow!" us. He didn't do it then...He doesn't do it now...that is not His way.**
- K. He once came in flesh, now bread; He came with sweat and blood, now wine; He came with water pouring from His body on the cross, He comes in baptism; He came preaching, He is still preaching...He comes in ways that just don't make the evening news.**

Part I: Naaman was a great man with a great need.

- A. Commander of the army of the king of Syria.**
- B. But he was also a leper.**
- C. When he heard about the report of the prophet and a possible cure, Naaman must have been thrilled.**
- D. But take note as to HOW Naaman sets out to reach the prophet...**
- E. Naaman the great man with great expectations would present himself in spectacular fashion (verse 5): he comes with credentials, with royal backing, with riches...silver, gold, clothes!**
- F. He is operating under Luther's "presumption of righteousness." We've got to look good, we've got to EARN it...and if I present myself impressively enough then I'll get that impressive, powerful, and spectacular blessing!**

- G. We are like this. How easy it is for us to negotiate with God and point to and rest upon our imagined laurels and all of the reasons we think we are worthy of God's blessings? How easy it is to depend on our preparations and efforts to make ourselves look good before God...and then God should come through. If I pray the right way, if I behave the right way, if I make the right offerings, etc. And based on this we set ourselves up and our expectations betray our cheap versions of "faith."
- H. Like people had their expectations of Messiah. Like people have their expectations on how God comes today! We have our expectations of how God should respond to our religion. In this, we show our sin.
- I. And when God doesn't comply, we blame Him.
- J. Naaman must have been terribly disappointed by the king of Israel's reaction (verse 7), BUT there was hope...Elisha sends a message!

Part II: In Mercy God blesses us poor sinners anyway!

- A. The Lord provided for Naaman.
- B. But He did so in returning to His way, not Naaman's way, not our way.
- C. God got back to His mode of operation.
- D. He would show Naaman that He does not operate according to our ways, our expectations, and our demands.
- E. Through humble means, like the flesh of our Savior, like the ordinary elements of the Holy Sacraments, God works and worked in a humble way for Naaman.
- F. Verse 10: *"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."*
- G. And Nathan was angry! He was soooo terribly disappointed. See what he says in verses 11-12.
- H. God doesn't do what I want Him to do!
- I. And thank God!
- J. It was Naaman's servant who understood: this simple word, this unimpressive word, this plain and ordinary word, this word that doesn't fit our expectations about God...this word, and not another, this word is "a great word"...a truly great word, not according to the standards of man, but according to the standards of God!
- K. Through this simple, plain, but GREAT Word God works wonders!

Conclusion: Naaman was restored, and so are you!

- A. Through the great word of God that is unimpressive to the world.
- B. This mode is not random, but has a purpose:
 - 1. It means that God comes not for the strong, but the weak. Thank Him!

2. It means that God comes not for the righteous, but sinners. Praise Him!
 3. It means that God comes not for our pride, but for our humility. He protects and preserves us!
 4. It means that God will not permit men to define righteousness, but leads us to depend utterly on Him. His way will not permit our manipulation.
- C. My children don't need a lot of stuff, they need their parents to love them!
- D. My wife doesn't need a lot of stuff, but she tells me that she really wants my time.
- E. God doesn't need us at all, but He loves us and chooses to save us...and all He wants is that we receive His Word...1) The Incarnate version; and 2) The Word and Sacrament version...no, they may not be impressive, but in these is the power of God, the wisdom of God...and YOUR light and life! Your forgiveness and your salvation! Your connection to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ...through what is simple, very simple.
- F. Naaman went down into the Jordan and dipped himself 7 times and he was restored...you are washed, you eat and drink, and you hear...that's it! Christ comes to you through these...and behold dear Christian, like Naaman (but even more) you are restored! Now, I have to say, THAT'S impressive beyond all our expectations! Thank God He doesn't do it our way, but His way...let's trust Him. The Lord knows what He's doing!