



COVENANT WORD

SURPRISING PROPHETS

2 KINGS 5:1-14

A message by Rev. Dr. Rodney Franklin, Interim Pastor

Sunday, July 7, 2019

This morning in our scripture in 2 Kings, Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram, says that he was in high favor with his master. Aram was Israel's neighbor but the two nations were not on friendly terms. Under David, Aram paid tribute to Israel. In Elisha's day, Aram was growing in power and frequently had raids on Israel, and tried to frustrate the people and bring about political confusion. Israeli captives were often taken back to Aram. The commander Naaman whose name means, "pleasantness" however, had leprosy.

Leprosy is an infectious disease that causes severe, disfiguring sores and nerve damage in the arms, legs, and skin areas around the body. The disease has been around since ancient times, and is often surrounded by terrifying, negative stigmas and there are stories of leprosy patients being shunned as outcasts. Outbreaks of leprosy have affected, and panicked, people all over the world. We don't know how he contracted it we just know that he has it. Sometimes when you are a leader a disease will know your name!

You remember Andrew Jackson, the seventh president, suffered from rotting teeth, chronic headaches, failing eyesight, bleeding in his lungs, internal infection and pain from two bullet wounds from two separate duels. Maybe you remember Woodrow Wilson experienced a series of strokes. These strokes affected his right hand, leaving him unable to write normally for a year. More strokes rendered Wilson blind in his left eye, paralyzing his left side and forcing him into a wheelchair. He kept his paralysis a secret but once it was discovered it instigated the 25th Amendment which states that the vice president will take power upon the president's death, resignation or disability. You remember Franklin D. Roosevelt who at the age of 39 experienced a severe attack of polio, resulting in total paralysis of both legs. We have had some political leaders who have had to live with disease and still served.

The word further says that when the Arameans were out on one of their raids they took a young girl from the

land of Israel and she served Naaman's wife. The girl whose name is unknown said to her mistress, Naaman's wife, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." How did this young girl know what she was talking about? She was just a slave? She was just a girl as described in the text. Did she have relatives who had gone to the prophet before? Was this something that she read or experienced for herself? We don't know how she knows what she knows, but what we do know is that these words she rendered from her mouth could consider her to be one of the surprising prophets in our scripture this morning. Why would we not count her words as an appetizer for her healing? Sometimes we take for

Never ever judge a book by it's cover!

granted the least of these, those not expected to offer great abundance in answers, assets or age! Y'all been keeping up with Cori "Co-Co" Gauff, the 15 year-old from Georgia, who is causing all kind of havoc at the Wimbledon Tennis tournament. Putting it more plainly, never ever judge a book by it's cover!

I made that mistake at the YMCA after playing several games of racquetball and I caught my breath literally after playing with a classmate from Leadership Birmingham who just happened to be about 6'-6" 250lb Special-Agent-In-Charge, FBI guy and I gave it a good run but loss all of my games. So we had finished and I was figuring out my next work out and this much older white guy who was headband wearing, with socks that would not stay up, and who probably had a platinum AARP card said to me: "You want to play?" I looked at him and responded externally, "Sure." And in my head said to myself, "I am going to wipe him all over the court!" Well my friends all I can say is I lived to tell the tell because after that man beat me so bad, I just knew I would need oxygen for at least a month. He placed that ball and hit some shots like he just came from the

Senior World tournament! What's the lesson? Never judge a book by its cover!

Jennifer Maddox is another example of not judging a book by its cover. She is a Chicago Police officer, who believes that they cannot arrest their way out of the violence that is plaguing the city, so she started a non-profit called Future-Ties, which offers an after school program and escape for children living in one of the public housing sites. Never judge a book by its uniform!

This is what we see in little girl who was taken and told the Naaman's wife, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!" God had placed her there for a purpose and she was faithful. Where has God put you? No matter how high or not so high your position, God can use you to spread God's word. What if we looked for opportunities to tell others what God can do and there's no telling who will hear God's message. That's what she did and what did Naaman do?

The word says Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. He replied, "By

Just to believe in Jesus Christ somehow doesn't seem significant enough to bring eternal life...

all means go and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman the captain, not only went with the letter, that said, "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy" but also took some silver, shekels of God, and sets of clothing.

When the king read the letter he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" Not the response that Naaman was expecting.

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, expressing emotion and anger, he sent a message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know

that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house, Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan

and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." Wait a minute, Elisha did not say this directly to Naaman and sent out someone to give him a message. Naaman was upset because he was the commander and he just knew that the prophet would come out to him and take care of his

leprosy. Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy." Naaman was mad because the cure for his disease seemed to simple. He was a hero commander in the army, full of pride and could not accept the simple cure of faith. Sometimes people react to God's offer of forgiveness in the same way. Just to believe in Jesus Christ somehow doesn't seem significant enough to bring eternal life and to obey God's commandments does not seem heroic. "What Naaman had to do to have his leprosy washed away is similar to what we must do to have our sin washed away – humbly accept God's mercy." Don't let the process keep us away from the cure, the healing that we most need from the healer!

So Naaman's servant went to him and said, My father if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it. So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God told him and his flesh was restored.

Restoration can come from surprising prophets.

Healing can come from surprising prophets.

Transformation can come from surprising prophets.

So let us live so God can use us!