

WELCOME 26th May 2024 – 2nd Sunday after Pentecost '24 B

2 Kings 5:1-19 (series slide with others separately on click)

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs/GPs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

(This week's slide – then words only then image only then verse on top of it)

As we move into this week... **UnSung Hero** Not the movie about the Australian Xn music family the **Smallbones**; but someone whose effort, contribution, bravery or self-sacrifice is not celebrated or recognized. Someone who does something essential, amazing, or life-saving but never gets credit, acclaim, or praise. Today we move the needle for one of those...

One day the girl said to her mistress, 'I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.'

"The girl" is a prisoner of war. An unnamed Israelite captured by the soldiers of Aram in a raid & put to work as maid for the general's wife, but whose faith in God extends deeply enough to offer kindness/hope to her mistress' husband: her captor.

Living courageously requires just that sort of living...of trusting God when those around you don't...of doing what's right when the risk is high...of giving grace even to those who may not respond gracefully to you. (Next 2 same slide)

As Paul would write to the Romans:

Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. – Romans 12:21

This young girl whose name we never learn is instrumental in bringing healing & faith to her master:

Naaman said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel... From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the Lord.'

You never know whose life might be healed by your courageous witness.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy Father, your power fills the universe with light & love. Your tender hand cradles those who are suffering or wounded. You welcome strangers and care for the lonely. We are awed by the amazing extent of your compassion.

Meet us where we are. Speak to us in ways we understand. Come to us, O God, & open our hearts and minds. Prepare us as only you can for the gift of our lives to your service. Renew our spirits and fill us with the life that only you can offer so we may share it with the world! In Jesus' Name...Amen!

Let's hear God's Word

(each of these separately)

FAITH CHAT:

1. Have you ever felt prompted by God to say something to someone? What happened?
2. The maid's courage gave courage to the other servants. How might you, living courageously do that for someone else?

2 PENTECOST '24 B – LIVING COURAGEOUSLY: UNNAMED MAID

(theme slide with next 3 same slide)

For want of a nail the shoe was lost;

For want of a shoe the horse was lost;

For want of a horse the battle was lost;

For loss of the battle meant loss of the kingdom —

All for the want of a horse-shoe nail.

I don't know how many variations of that old poem I memorized in primary/high school...it was all about attention to the "little" things. How **small** things matter. Like the old, **Look** after the pennies & the pounds will look after themselves... "dollars" in my world...but again the reminder was: pay attention to small things. In real life sometimes all you need is a word or two: "Watch your step!" "Duck!" "If you try it like this...you'll find it easier." "Can I help you w/ that?" "R U **Ok?**" Sometimes all you need is a word because small things matter. (next 3 same slide)

Isn't it odd how quite often the "small things/people" escape the notice of "big people?" How many videos have we seen where some celebrity/politician is caught yelling @ a police officer, "**Don't** you know who I am?!?!?" TV reality series "Undercover **Boss**" was great at helping us & "big people" start to take notice of the little people who make our world work. I've always said if God hadn't called me to be a pastor I'd have loved to be a garbage collector. No meetings. No late night phone calls & if I went on strike...city is on its knees begging me to come back to work.

In the narrative we just read, all the "big people" get the majority of the attention, but Naaman gets nowhere w/o one sentence from his wife's maid. *I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.* Sometimes all you need is a word because small things matter. Now all we really know here is that Naaman is respected valued & honoured by the King of Aram. He's a "big" person. But big people get big problems & Naaman's is some version of leprosy. Obviously in Aram leprosy doesn't interfere w/ his leading the army, being at the King's side, or keeping company w/ his wife. It may be disfiguring or troubling, but it doesn't disqualify him from bigness, & it does give opportunity for the maid to speak.

You/I can easily feel insignificant over against the world in which we live. We have so little influence over most of what effects our day to day lives. All we can do about the rising cost of living is spend less/differently, none of us can influence the price of groceries/rent/rates. What influence do we have over the political system/decisions beyond our vote? We can't fix rising crime rates or juvenile detention problems. International crises or neighbourhood hooligans are equally beyond my pay grade.

So much of what happens to us is outside of/beyond our ability to control...so it's easy to feel small & insignificant. Consider the girl we met in this account...

The girl is a POW...captured in a raid by the Aramean army in some backwater border town in Israel. Evidently she's been treated well; saved from the worst of what a raiding army can do & now firmly in place as the maid to (Naaman's) the general's wife. Talk about no choice & no control over her life! But whatever else, she serves faithfully. Rather than dig her heels in & make life difficult for Naaman's household or herself, she buckles down & does her job. She proves herself loyal & trustworthy...AND like other captives we find in the pages of the Bible (Joseph, Daniel, Rack, Shack & Benny) her faith in God extends deeply enough to offer kindness/hope to her mistress' husband: her captor. When it would have been easy enough for her to ask God to make Naaman's condition worse, she offers a solution. *I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.* Her trust in God assumes God has a place in his merciful heart even for someone who has turned her life upside down. (next 2 same slide) How did Jesus say it?

I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil & the good, & he sends rain on the just & the unjust alike. – Mt 5:44-45 and Paul...

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink... Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. – Romans 12:20-21

Her trust in God assumes God has a place in his merciful heart even for someone who has turned her life upside down. Imagine the risk...what if Elisha says, "No"? What if Naaman goes on this journey & it becomes a wild goose chase? How many of us possess & demonstrate this kind of courage...trusting God when those around us don't...of doing what's right when the risk is high...of giving grace even to those who may not respond gracefully to you...of pointing to **your** hope as **THE HOPE** someone else can share...of inviting someone else into the hands of God that hold you even in difficult circumstances. (next 4 same slide)

I got a text from Áine this week. Her 2nd trimester of uni started & she wrote: "**You** know it's going to be a great term when the lecturer says, 'throw away your values & do things that don't sit well with them.'" How do you like them apples? Throw away your values & do stuff that's contrary to what you hold dear. What do you think I texted back? "**Ahhh**...what a marvelous chance to be light!" 'Cos that Throw away your values & do stuff that's contrary to what you hold dear is dark stuff. I mean that To literally advocate violating ones values...conscience...that which is core to you is dark stuff. Then I shot through what's on the GP: "**God**, grant me the courage not to give up what is right even though I think it is hopeless." - Admiral Chester Nimitz

God don't let me falter when it gets hard & no one but you has my back. DA Carson said years ago...**We** drift toward compromise & call it tolerance. We drift toward disobedience & call it freedom. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control & call it relaxation. We slouch toward prayerlessness & delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism. We slide toward godlessness & convince ourselves we have been set free. That's not the maid...not living courageously. *'I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.'* (next 3 same slide)

I love what happens...Naaman seems genuinely convinced the girl knows her stuff & tells his boss the king about his proposed journey. The King blesses him w/ a letter of intro & a stack of goodies for the King of Israel. See where all this is happening... among the big people in their usual big people way of dealing w/ things. King gives goodies & a commission to another king. As if just speaking something & paying for it makes it happen. A royal parliamentary pronouncement & a levy & something goes "poof!" But the King of Israel knows he can't heal leprosy so he freaks out. Elisha sends word, "Stop freaking out & please send Naaman to me."

Naaman is still thinking like a big person...he's got a truckload of goodies & is expecting some hocus pocus magic act to make the leprosy go away. He wants to be treated like a big person & he's prepared to pay big people prices to get what he wants. So he gets cranky when what's required of him is simple obedience. **Go** & wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, & you will be healed of your leprosy." But rather than do the simple small thing he stomps off w/ his knickers in a twist. Thank God there are some more small people around. **But** his officers (servants) tried to reason with him & said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go & wash & be cured!'" They know their boss better than he knows himself. If Elisha had told him "go wrastle a bear" he'd have stripped to his breeches & gone to find a bear...but a simple "go swim in the river" is beyond him & he comes unstuck...but their wisdom & patience prevail & Naaman does what he's told & hey presto! Leprosy's gone. Naaman's healed. *NOT* the end of the story...

Then Naaman & his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, & Naaman said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel." He still wants to pay...to be the big man here...but grace is all he's going to get...just like you – just like me. All God can do is act in grace, mercy, unending love. And that's where & why the real change takes place... (next 2 same slide)

Then Naaman said, "All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, & I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the Lord. However, may the Lord pardon me

in this one thing: When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there & leans on my arm, may the Lord pardon me when I bow, too." He returns home a different man, a healed man w/ loads of foreign dirt on which to worship the true God...& a plea for further grace because as the servant of a pagan King he must attend the King's worship... **Go** in peace," Elisha said. Of course God understands the hard places we find ourselves & acts in grace in the midst of them.

I mentioned last week I'm going up to Western Sydney come August to hang out w/ a church planter...He's got revival busting loose...all because he took a minute to ask after the health of a dad he saw at the drop off/pick up spot outside kids' school. Danny's revival story... (next 2 same slide)

Monday...I had a shop assistant I've been chatting w/ for 20 yrs stop & told me about a vacation he & his wife took to the Hiroshima Memorial...he was visibly shaken just in the retelling...We got into his heart over by the bananas...and the click & collect young woman I brought a souvenir from Texas for her & her fiancée has just had something go sideways in her life...she didn't go into detail, but it was something where she couldn't even stay at work was going "home & die a little"... but I'm going to keep praying & asking & we'll see. I'm suddenly on the inside of some lives *'I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.'*

Sometimes all you need is a word because small things matter...& faith in God that extends deeply enough to offer kindness/hope to someone else. Living courageously requires just that...trusting God when those around you don't...doing what's right when the risk is high...giving grace even to those who may not respond gracefully to you. You never know whose life might be healed by your courageous witness to Jesus. (each one separately)

TAKE IT HOME-

How will you seize the opportunities God gives you this week to live with courage & act with obedience?

How will you prepare yourself for when that opportunity arises?

Let's pray w/ that in mind... Lord Jesus, in the grand scheme of eternity, our lives seem short & only find significance & meaning in you. Help us remember how precious & significant we are in your sight & that you lay down your own life so we can be yours. Lead us to be obedient in the small things & point to you as the One w/ the power to rescue heal & bring salvation to all. We ask this in your powerful name. Amen.