



ALL SAINTS SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 1/2, 2014

1ST LUTHERAN, MARSHALL
PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

II KINGS 5:1-14; I CORINTHANS 1:18-25; MATTHEW 8:2-3

Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

All Saints Weekend is a great time for us to take a break, take a time out, step off the treadmill of life, **and** take a few moments to look back over the last 12 months...

On the **one** hand, we acknowledge that it's partly a story about...**death**. 12 members of our congregation have died since this time one year ago, so part of why we're here today is to **mourn** with those whose hearts are either heavy with **pain** or empty with the **loss** of a **loved one**...

And on the **other** hand, the last 12 months have **also** been a story about **life**. 14 families have experienced the gift of baptism with their children, so we **celebrate** with them as they sing a song of **new life** and thanksgiving in Christ.

You've seen all their names printed in the bulletin – those **saints** who have **died**, **and** those **future** saints who were baptized here. Each represents a child of God. Each represents a unique story. Each represents a family...**and** this family of faith called First Lutheran...**as well as** the family of all humanity.

As we **mourn-and-celebrate** – at the very same time, we'll take a good, long look at God's amazing ability to use very ordinary people – and circumstances – to do some extraordinary things. With the amazing story of Naaman's healing, we'll be able to see how God **also** works in **our** lives to accomplish his good and gracious will for all people.

Retell story: Naaman gets leprosy

Servant girl gives hope

Naaman (hears through wife) comes to King of Aram

King commands Naaman to Israel, sends letter to King of Israel

King of Israel freaks ...

Elisha gives hope

Naaman comes to Elisha

Elisha's servant commands 7 dips

Naaman freaks

Naaman's servants give hope

Naaman bathes, comes back to Elisha Elisha rejects gifts

Naaman asks for dirt, special dispensation

Elisha blesses Naaman

Here are the three questions I asked you to consider:

Who are the heroes in this story?

What motivates them?

What's the message that God wants us to hear?

Let's start with the powerful people. **What do we know about ?**

Naaman:

-a powerful and popular military leader who is desperate for hope

*He has a lot to lose (family, career, status, life...)

-he is prideful, and expects to be received with honor

-he is a man of the world, and is certain that his money will talk

-he also expects a dramatic manifestation of God's power...

King of Aram and King of Israel:

-typical politicians: either *clueless* or *suspicious*...

-they're the top players in their worldly games

-but they're so far outside God's arena they don't have a clue what the game is!

Elisha:

-a mighty prophet, compelled by the Spirit to proclaim God's Word

-completely confident that God will heal this foreigner

-a little unorthodox in his methods – tells Naaman to visit him, but then refuses to meet with the sick man

Then, of course, we have the *supporting* cast. **What do we know about ?**

The young Israelite slave girl:

- kidnapped by Naaman's soldiers
- taken from her home, her family, her country
- is not bitter about being made a slave
- seems to have great **compassion** for her new family
- is absolutely certain that Elisha will cure Naaman if he goes to Israel

Elisha's servant:

- the mouthpiece of the prophet

Naaman's servants:

- seem to have great compassion for their master
- not afraid to approach or challenge the great man – even when he's mad

So there you have it – now let's hear your answers:

Who are the heroes in the story and What motivates them?

For me, it's those people with *no power*: a slave girl, Elisha's servants, Naaman's servants. People like those 26 names in the bulletin, for whose lives the candles are burning on the altar. Ordinary people just like you and me: optimistic youth, the wizened elderly, and everyone in between.

Certainly, without Elisha, the Kings and Naaman, there would be no story. But neither would there be a story without:

- a brave and compassionate little **slave girl**,
- or Naaman's brave and compassionate **servants**, and, thanks to Elisha,
- the prophet's **servant** who was brave to face the wrath of Naaman
when he had to tell the mighty warrior to go jump in a lake (river!)

And this seems to be the message that God wants us to take to heart. Over and over again, it is in and through ordinary people that God seems to want to work. So far this fall, we've heard about God's promise to **old** Abraham and Sarah, and then God's call to the **young** boy **Samuel** to be a prophet. We've seen **mighty Pharaoh** take a **mighty fall**, and the young boy **David** fell a nasty **giant**.

That's the power of God's compassion in your life and in mine. Always and everywhere, God knows when people are suffering. And always and everywhere, God works to bless them and give them hope. Every once in a while, God's help comes as a complete surprise – like a shot out of the blue!

But most of the time, God works through people...like you and me, and a little Israelite slave girl, or Naaman's servants.

It's a true blessing to belong to a family: to have people who love us, whom we can love and care for. So it is that God calls each of us to show compassion to all of God's children – at home, in school, on the playground, at work, in the stores – and on the street corners.

Trust that God is committed to showing compassion to you...and through you, to all our neighbors. Amen.