



## Unexpected Prophets

Help comes to Naaman from an unexpected source, a young Israelite serving girl. Naaman hopes for a dramatic healing of his leprosy; however, God works in a simple way. God's healing and restoration come through unexpected prophets. As the other readings affirm, God's presence is revealed through perseverance and faithful witness.

### Focus Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-14

The kingdoms of Israel and Syria (Aram) have existed in an uneasy peace for some years. Naaman commands Aram's army so successfully that it is said that Yahweh is with him. Naaman has a debilitating skin disease, which likely carries with it social shame and isolation. His wife has a young servant girl captured from Israel. "If only Naaman could go to Samaria," the girl says, "there is a prophet there who could cure him."

Naaman takes seriously the words of the young girl, though she is an unlikely prophet. Observing proper diplomatic protocol, he visits the king of Aram, who sends him off with letters of reference and rich gifts to the king of Israel. Naaman must have been desperate to make such a long and dangerous journey to a land suspicious of foreign powers.

The king of Israel is dismayed. He knows that he cannot cure anyone

of leprosy. He wonders: is the king of Aram trying to pick a fight with him? But Elisha hears of this and tells the king to send Naaman. Naaman arrives with servants and chariots, but Elisha doesn't even come out of the house to greet him. Is this because Naaman is a Gentile? Is it because Naaman has leprosy? Is Elisha testing Naaman's faith?

By a messenger, Elisha tells Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan, another journey over mountainous land. In spite of his wish for healing, Naaman is outraged. He has come a long way. Naaman is expecting acknowledgement of his status, and a dramatic cure. He could have stayed at home and washed in the rivers there. But God is making a simple request, asking for obedience.

Naaman's servants persuade him to do as the prophet asks. Again it is servants – those without power and status – who bring God's message. Naaman washes in the Jordan and is healed. In the remainder of the chapter, we read that this healing leads Naaman to accept the truth of Elisha's words. Naaman affirms his belief that the God of Israel is the God over all the earth. God's power to heal, to bring new life, is not just for Israel, but for all people.

The psalmist sings a song of thanksgiving after recovery from illness in **Psalm 30**. God has turned

weeping into dancing. This was the experience of Naaman, and is our experience also; God deserves our praise.

In **Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16** Paul speaks to the Galatians about the importance of caring for others, especially those within the family of faith. We are to bear one another's burdens. Verse 3 reminds us of Naaman's story. We must not boast of our own strength, but only in the cross of Jesus Christ. Peace will be upon those who follow in this way.

Jesus teaches that faithfulness to God's word is more important than showy deeds of power. In **Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**, Jesus sends out 70 followers, perhaps recalling the story of Moses choosing 70 elders in **Numbers 11:16**. Jesus tells them how to behave as they spread the gospel to other towns. God reaches out to all people with a message of peace.

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Ordinary people, including such unexpected prophets as children, minister to us in unexpected ways. We, too, can be "unexpected prophets" – caring for others not only in dramatic actions, but also in small and simple ways. We are sent out to spread the good news of God's reign of justice and peace to those we meet every day. What supplies do we need for our journey and ministry?

