

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Children's Readings

From the Second Book of Kings, Chapter 2

Naaman was the commander of the army of the King of Aram. He had the respect of the king, because through Naaman, God had made sure the Aramaeans won a battle. But Naaman was a leper.

Now, in one of their battles, a young girl from Israel was captured and taken to be a servant in Naaman's household. She said to Naaman's wife "If only Naaman would ask the prophet of Samaria. He would cure Naaman's leprosy.

Naaman's wife told him what the girl had said. Naaman went to the king and told him, and asked if he could go to see the prophet. The king said "Of course you can go. I'll even send a letter to the king of Israel."

So Naaman set out on his journey, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten festive robes. When he met the king of Israel, he gave the letter to him. It said "With this letter, I am sending my servant Naaman to you for you to cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he was very sad and angry, and tore his robe. He said "Am I a god to give life and death? I can't cure leprosy! The king of Aram must be trying to pick a fight with me!"

Elisha, a prophet in the land of Israel, heard that the king had been so angry as to tear his clothes. He said to the king of Israel "You didn't have to tear your clothes! Let Naaman come to me, and then he'll find a prophet."

So Naaman and his team and chariot went around to Elisha's place. Elisha didn't come outside, but sent someone out to give Naaman this message: Go and bathe seven times in the River Jordan, and your skin will be cured."

But this was too simple for Naaman. He said "Surely the prophet could come out here to me and stand there and call on the name of his God, wave his hand over my skin and cure it? The rivers in my land are just as good as the River Jordan! I could go and bathe in them!" Naaman turned on his heel and went off in a rage.

But his servants chased after him and said "If the prophet had asked you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? Just because this is easy doesn't mean it won't work."

So Naaman calmed down and went and bathed in the River Jordan as Elisha had told him to do. And the leprosy left his skin looking as fresh and clean as a little child's skin.

Psalm 30 verses 10 to 12

Hear, God, take pity on me!

God, help me!

You have turned my mourning into dancing,
you have stripped off my sackcloth and wrapped me in gladness;
and now my heart, silent no longer, will play you music;
God, my God, I will praise you forever.

From the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 9 verses 2 to 9.

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his knees: "If you want to," he said, "you can cure me". Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. "Of course I want to!" he said. "Be cured!"

And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured! Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him, "Don't say a word about this to anyone, but go and show the priest so he can see you are clean again and you can come back into the community. Make an offering according to the law as thanksgiving to God for your recovery."

The man went away, but couldn't help talking about his cure to everyone. The word got around so far that Jesus couldn't go into any town without being mobbed by crowds.

From Paul's first letter to the people of the church at Corinth, chapter 9 verses 24 to 27.

All the runners at the stadium are trying to win, but only one of them gets the prize. You must run in the same way, meaning to win (the Kingdom of God). All the fighters at the games go into strict training; they do this just to win a wreath that will wither away, but we do it for a wreath that will never wither. That is how I run, intent on winning (the Kingdom of God); that is how I fight, not beating the air. I treat my body hard and make it obey me, for I don't want to be disqualified.

Question: What do we have to do to run in this race? Is it a competition or a description of how much we are prepared to do to enter the Kingdom of God?