



St. Paul's 2026 Stewardship Campaign

Be Thou My Vision

An invitation to discern and embrace God's Vision
for our congregation and our lives.

Week 2: Welcome, God's place of Healing

Part I: What do I need from the Lord?

Take a few minutes to place yourself in God's presence. Still and open your heart.

Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

We'll begin with a little background. Aram was in modern day Syria, the area around Damascus and was a threat to Israel. There are many details in this story which appear in the story of Saul's conversion in the Acts of the apostles.

Each character in the story adds another dimension. Naaman is a warrior, respected and well loved. The disease is random and tragic. The young girl who points him to the prophet Elisha is a slave from Israel serving in Naaman's home. She is the least likely to be heard and believed, let alone to care what happens to her master. Her compassion, in spite of her circumstance, is enviable.

There are two kings in the story, one of Aram and one of Israel. The king of Aram is the one who surprisingly responds to the promise of healing. And then there is Elisha who challenges his own King's faith in the promise. Without fanfare he simply tells Naaman to wash in the Jordan.

Land and water are also characters in this story. Comparisons are made between the rivers of Aram and the Jordan. I haven't seen the rivers of Aram, but the Jordan is a muddy stream. Being "cleaned" it seems laughable. The belief was that gods had boundaries and locations. The "God of Israel" only had power in his territory. Naaman asks for two loads of dirt from Israel as a way of bringing God back to Aram at least for the purposes of offering thanks and praise for his healing.

Today ,we will read the first half of the story and include part of the text that was omitted in the lectionary.

Slowly read the following Scripture out loud.

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." ⁴ So Naaman^[a] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the

name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

I invite you to read the story again and pay close attention to Naaman, who meets his needs? How does he react to the invitation to healing? What gets in his way?

Now, close your eyes and let the story flow again in your mind from memory. It doesn't have to be exact, and it will probably be more meaningful if you let God tinker with it a little in your heart. Begin by having a conversation with the slave-girl about what you need most from God. Then let the story flow from there. Hear an invitation. Set out in your heart. Notice any hesitation. Just let the prayer unfold from there.

Take time to write about your prayer experience:

Closing Prayer:

*Good and gracious God,
Like Naaman, I too am in need of your healing presence.
Hear my prayer.
Open my heart to your presence, your care,
your love and healing.
Help me to see the people and places
you use to reach out me.
Fill my heart with gratitude and joy
for your care and love. Amen.*

Part II: Where do I put limits on the Lord?

Take a few minutes to place yourself in God's presence. Still and open your heart.

Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Slowly read the following Scripture out loud.

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." ⁴ So Naaman^[a] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do

something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

I invite you to read the story again and pay close attention to Naaman and the King of Israel who both hesitate to participate in God’s promised healing. How do you feel about their experiences as you read?

Now, close your eyes and let the story flow again in your mind from memory. Again, doesn’t have to be exact, let God guide your heart. Place yourself in the story as either Naaman or the King of Isreal. Let the story play out. Have conversations with the characters in the story. Maybe a new character or two appear.

Take time to write about your prayer experience:

Closing Prayer:

*Good and gracious God,
you are faithful love
even when we are hesitant fools!
When I hesitate to accept your love and care
give me ears attentive to your voice,
and hands eager to reach out
for your care and compassion.
Fill my heart with wonder and awe
at your abiding presence. Amen*

Part III: Where have I found God's presence?

Take a few minutes to place yourself in God's presence. Still and open your heart.

Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5:8-19

Today we will move forward in the story focusing on Naaman's response to God's healing. Notice he not only returns home, but is given the freedom to fully re-engage in his normal routine with the prophet's blessing. He isn't expected to become Jewish. He isn't asked to stop being a soldier. And yet, we see changes in Naaman; changes he chooses as a response to his experience of God's presence and action in his life.

Slowly read the following Scripture out loud.

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant." ¹⁶ But he said, "As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!" He urged him

to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, please let two mule loads of earth be given to your servant, for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the Lord. ¹⁸ But may the Lord pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant on this one count.” ¹⁹ He said to him, “Go in peace.”

I invite you to read the story again. Pay attention to where Naaman travels to and from. What in his life has been interrupted by his disease, and what is restored by his healing?

Now, close your eyes and call to mind times when you have had an encounter with God. Maybe it was a time of healing. Or maybe it was a time of accompaniment in a time of chaos. It could also be a time of joy and celebration. Hold in your heart all that come to mind. Make a simple list:

Now go back over your list and notice where these things took place, and how did they change the path of your everyday life? Notice how many

times what changed wasn't a physical healing, but an emotional or spiritual need. What stands out to you? Write a few words:

*Closing Prayer:
Good and gracious God,
you are always drawing us close to your heart,
inviting us into your healing presence.
Give us hearts open to recognize
your abiding presence
and the ways you mold and shape our lives.
Give us hearts of gratitude for your attentive care. Amen.*

Part IV: What do I carry with me from my experience of God's presence in my life?

Take a few minutes to place yourself in God's presence. Still and open your heart.

Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5:8-17

Slowly read the following Scripture out loud.

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant." ¹⁶ But he said, "As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!" He urged him to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, "If not, please let two mule loads of earth be given to your servant, for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the Lord."

I invite you to read the story again. Pay attention to Naaman's reaction to his healing. Feel his gratitude! Feel his joy at having his life restored.

Go back over your prayer and writing from yesterday. Remember the places of encounter with God. What have you held on to, cherished, from these places and times? What serves as a reminder of God's presence and action in YOUR life? Make a list.

Take your list to prayer and show God, what you hold as a memory between you. See if God has something to say about it or offers new memories. Write about your prayer:

Closing Prayer:

*Good and gracious God,
even when we forget,
you remember.*

Help us to respond to your love and grace.

Help us to treasure the gift of faith.

*Help us to treasure your abiding in presence
above all things. Amen.*

Part V: Who Do I Need to Tell about the Lord?

Take a few minutes to place yourself in God's presence. Still and open your heart.

Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-15a

Before you begin today. Think about who you know who needs God's healing presence. Who is hurting? Who is alone? Whose pain, physical or emotional, is chronic and isolating? Who has been told God doesn't love them? Who feels abandoned by God?

Write down their names:

Slowly read the following Scripture out loud.

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." ⁴ So Naaman^[a] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.”

I invite you to read the story again. Pay attention once again to Naaman’s reaction to the invitation to meet God. Notice who invites. Who opens doors of welcome?

Take your list of names and imaginatively let the scripture play out in your heart. Let this Word of God become an invitation to those on your list. Maybe they become Naaman in the story. Maybe they are invited later? Who invites? How do they react? Who affirms the invitation? Where are YOU in the story? Just let God reveal God self to you in this prayer.

Write about your prayer experience:

Closing Prayer:

*Loving God,
you know the list in my heart –
people I love,
and those I struggle to love.
Help me to be a place
of welcome where your
healing can be revealed
to all I meet. Amen.*