

Resistance vs. Surrender

First Congregational Church, Branford
July 7, 2019/2 Kings 5:1, 9-12; Luke 17:11-14
Rev. Suzanne Personette

Play *Rescue*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3U4Q2R7ZZAE>

Now, let the word of the Lord rescue us:

Hear how Naaman was rescued:

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 leprosy. ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." ¹¹But 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 leprosy! ¹²Are not Abana 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. ¹³But 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?'" ¹⁴So 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.

From the Gospel of Luke we have a story in which Jesus cleanses 10 lepers:

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean.

The word of God for the people of God. Let us pray....

What strikes me most in these two stories of lepers is how one responds with resistance to the remedy and the other lepers respond with surrender...

Which one are you in the life of faith – prone to resistance, or prone to surrender?... Which one are you...

High and mighty commander of the army, Naaman, refuses to surrender because he doesn't get the healing he deems appropriate for someone of his stature – *go and wash in the muddy Jordan River seven times, indeed. That is humiliating. Surely for me the prophet Elisha could wave his hand over me.* It's fascinating, isn't it, when human beings have gained a certain position and/or wealth in life, they want special treatment. Where I want special treatment is when I'm waiting in line! I try to laugh at myself for forgetting that I'm just a shmoe like everyone else. It's always fun to watch how the privileged behave when they have to wait in line or on the phone. Maybe without the trappings of privilege it's easier for the more common lepers in Luke to show humility and surrender. In which case I say, Lord, give me the *heart* of a common leper. *Give me the heart of a common leper....*

The remedies in both stories are so simple. Naaman's servants are like, dude, don't make it so complicated. He said, "wash, and be clean." In Luke, Jesus only says *go show the priests* - see, the priests had to authenticate healings. It was *in the moment of turning to go* do this that they were made clean. They were surrendering to Jesus.

The remedy seems to go with the individual and the situation. Elisha could've chosen to heal Naaman with a word or a touch, but he forces Naaman to take part in his own healing, and to do something he doesn't want to do! – go and wash 7 times - because it's not only Naaman's outside that needs cleansing. He needs a little inside work, doesn't he? Get down in that dirty water, son - and be made clean!

Well... Jesus looks at each one of us and knows the simple remedy for our own leprosy: To one he might say - counseling is in order, to another - exercise will help you, to another he's firm and says - stop smoking!, to someone else - attend a racial justice conversation - that will heal your heart, to another *he sees into them* and says 5 minutes of daily prayer and meditation will rescue you, to another he says go on blind dates - sign up with match.com - or Christian Mingle - I hear they're very good!, he might say to a couple - get marriage counseling, to someone else - go to an anger management class... now!, a 12-step program, to the privileged he says - go and work with the homeless - to those without, take a class about another religion, maybe he's peering into all of our hearts today and says - forgive someone... forgive someone. If someone works too much and too hard, Jesus says, surrender to Sabbath rest. Every day surrender to some Sabbath rest.

We often resist the remedy, don't we, even when it's so simple. Jesus says, I will rescue you, but here's the prescription! This is what you need to do - and I'll

be in that prescription. I will rescue you. Surrender is a hard word for Americans! We say, *I'm going to do this for myself, I'm going to do it my way, and I'm going to get it done. I don't need you to heal me, Jesus - I'll heal myself!* Surrender means STOP, stop what you're doing - its time to go by another way... Jesus' way...

When Dr. Phil tries to help people heal he listens to them as they tell him all the bad things about their spouse or work situation, and they dig in with their side, *I am not going to forgive my neighbor even if it will make me happy, joyous, and free*, their face red and contorted. He looks at them and says... "how's that workin' for ya?" I love that line. I love that line for counselors. Whenever we see someone's life not working so well - they complain a lot, they work like a dog, they cry all the time... - honey, how's that workin' for ya? They need to be rescued! They could surrender to Jesus. And, life would be so different...

Whenever I reflect upon remedies... what mostly comes to the forefront is the simplest and humblest of them... *let Jesus hold you*. He will rescue you. Fall back in his arms. Just be held. I know that can be a strange thing for a man to hear, but I know so many men and boys who could benefit from letting Jesus hold them - just be held... let him be your rescue.

I was reading a story written by a Texas minister who said when her 2 year old son fell and hurt his knee she frantically searched for an injury but the boy *just wanted her to hold him*. She said to her congregation, Y'all, I could let him do that all day. It doesn't hurt me at all that he's screaming in my ear. Then she paused and said, *You are God's precious child. He will hold you while you scream.*" Scream how life isn't fair - go ahead.

Surrender and let Jesus hold you.

Is God knocking at your door today with something he wants you to surrender to toward your healing...

The preacher preaches best what she most needs to learn... My boy is leaving me at the end of August. I'm resisting it. I mentioned it to Mike Giordano last Sunday - he Dr. Phil'd me when he bluntly said, "What do you want, he's growing up!" ... The ways I'm resisting are by getting mad at Abe when he tells me that after working his full-time job he's going out to dinner or to a movie with friends. I want to be able to punish him - to keep him a toddler, my child, my boy. *No, you can't go do that, you have to come home and be with me. I'll take X-box away!* Rescue me, Jesus. In my brokenness and feeling like I have nothing left, *that's where Jesus meets me - if I surrender. Walk humbly with me*, he says. Then he says, *Let me be with Abe... I'll stand in for you... I'll hold him for you.*

...Lastly, worship is a rescue, isn't it? Worship is a rescue! It's your faith that brings you back each week. Even in the long, hot days of summer! You

surrender to the Sabbath, you honor it, you keep it holy. Thank you... I see each of you open to God's healing. Whatever you're dealing with right now - there's a cure - if you surrender. Amen.

Hymn: *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*