

## **2 Kings 5:1-14/ Luke 10:1 -20**

The passage we have read from the Old Testament is one of my favourite Biblical readings. The story of Naaman, a great general in the Syrian army that had conquered the entire Northern Israel, a man of valour but he had leprosy. Naaman had everything power could buy, including Hebrew slaves from the conquered people but his power could not buy him the cure for leprosy. He was very powerful, rich, and respected, everything and everyone else respected him except leprosy. He consulted doctors and all the magicians, but they failed to cure his leprosy.

Seeing the master suffering and wasting resources, the slave girl whispered, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria, He would cure him of his leprosy". Powerful as he was, Naaman had no basis for listening to the poor little slave girl, but desperation forced him to listen. All things being equal, Naaman as a Jew would not have accepted stepping in the land of Samaria because that was a profane space for the Jews but due to desperation, Naaman had no option but to go.

But one thing with Naaman, he understood protocols so well. He had to speak to the king of Syria to talk the King to the King of Samaria and indeed the king of Syria wrote a letter, **"I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy"**. Why writing a letter to the King and not direct to the prophet? In Syria the prophets were employees of the King and Naaman assumed that it worked the same way in Israel. But the King of Israel panicked. He did not command any Hebrew prophet and did not believe that the prick prophet from the North, Elisha could heal anyone. Receiving the letter, the Israelite King tore his garments and was greatly disappointed, **"Am I God who brings people back to life?"** For him leprosy meant death. But Elisha hearing that, he then sent a word to the King, **"please do not tore your garment, send Naaman to me"**.

Naaman's convoy charged towards Elisha's place, only for Elisha choosing not even to see Naaman's face but giving him an instruction, **"Go and wash yourself seven times in river Jordan and you will be well"**. Naaman was angry and rhetorically asked, **"Are the rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar not better than all the waters of Israel?"** **Naaman complained** "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot, and cure me of my leprosy".

He was desperately ill but at the same time wanted to tell the prophet how to heal him. Experience is good but if not treated well can be a barrier to success/salvation. Experienced people are always difficult to deal with. When I arrived at my previous parish, the very first day, after service when I was greeting people, one innocent old man came to me and said, "You are too young to be a priest". I nearly reminded him that Jesus was 30 years old when he started ministry, 10 years younger than me. But I just smiled. The same guy, on my farewell said, "**for all the minister who passed through St Lawrence, you are the one who stayed the shortest time, but you are the one who had the greatest impact in my life**" -are the rivers of Damascus not better than all the waters of Israel? -the problem of experience.

On the same parish, I presented my plan for a bible study and a certain influential fine man said to me, "**That has been tried several times here but did not work**" I said what was the problem? Then he said, "**People would come for first two or three weeks then they will slowly get tired and after five sessions or so only two or three would have left**". Again, I said so its not the problem of the people because they expressed interest in the begging so maybe we might need to try another approach. In that parish I run Bible study every Saturday for the entire year but surprisingly that man did not miss even one session and every week numbers were increasing, "are Abana and Pharpar not better than all the waters of Israel-the problem of experience.

Naaman visited the Doctor but with a prescription already, but his servant persuaded him, "**My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, than, when he tells you, "Wash and be cleansed"**" Due to desperation again Naaman listened and was healed and confessed, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except the God of Israel". Then he tried to persuade Elisha to accept his gift, but Elisha replied, "**As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing**". -true servanthood, no self praise. The 72 returned praising themselves, "**Lord, even the demons submitted to us**" Jesus then reminded them, "**Do not rejoice that the spirits submitted to you but rejoice that your names are written in heave**. Amen.