



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 30

[Worship]

1 | will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. 2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. 3 O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. 4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. 5 For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. 6 As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." 7 By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. 8 To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: 9 "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? 10 Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!" 11 You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, 12 so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Consider:

This week's gospel story feels familiar. It has all the ingredients of Jesus' healings: A stranger, a touch from Jesus, a miracle. The story should be outlandish, shocking, or, at least, attention-getting. But to us, even those of us who might approach such miraculous healings with cynical modern eyes, stories like Jesus and the leper are a touch domesticated. We've heard them in Sunday school for so long.

The story of Naaman is more jarring. I admit that I like Naaman for wholly narcissistic reasons—he reminds me over and over of myself. He is a powerful military leader, a

commander for the king of Aram, but he has leprosy. Through the unlikely testimony of an anonymous Hebrew slave girl, Naaman hears of a powerful prophet in Israel, Elisha. Naaman makes his way to Samaria, is eventually directed to Elisha, and then hears an unexpected message: "Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan," says Elisha, "and your flesh will be restored."

Seven dips in a river? That wasn't what Naaman was expecting. He was expecting drama, magic. He was expecting the prophet to wave a magic wand and, poof! A cure. When Naaman finds that the work of God is sometimes utterly ordinary, he is not just disappointed, he is "angry" (2 Kings 5.11).

And there's more at stake here than physical health or glowing skin. In Naaman's healing we have a summary of the tools God uses to work out our salvation. Ordinary tools like water, and ultimately a carpenter from Nazareth. To be healed of sin, we must all submit to the same, not-very-dramatic cure Naaman finally accepted: A simple baptism in water accompanied by a simple faith. As Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary on 2 Kings, "The methods for the healing of the leprosy of sin are so plain.... Believe, and be saved; repent, and be pardoned; wash, and be clean."

Reflection and Action:

Like Naaman, I often find that I want God to behave one way, and when God refuses to go along with my expectations, I get ticked. These stories tell us more than that God can miraculously heal our bodies. God also works in ways we don't always anticipate, appreciate, or like. When have you given into Christ's simple and ordinary blessings, being surprised that healing was there all along? What disqualifies you from Christ's "prize?"

[Scripture]

1 Corinthians 9.24-27

24 Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. 25 Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. 26 So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; 27 but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.