

# SERMON FOR JULY 7, 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)  
The Lord's Supper – 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **2 Kings 5:1-14 (Focus); Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

Message: ***"We Can Rise from Difficult Waters  
Healed & Refreshed!"***

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## **Gathering in the Word**

***Prayer: GOD of compassion, open us all this morning to hear messages from near and far, from familiar and unfamiliar—as we seek the healing and wholeness you promise to us; in Jesus’ name. Amen.***

We are Christ’s disciples and we are called and invited to open up to GOD presence and work around us all the time. When we are open—we can discover GOD from different places, from foreign voices, and from activities we may have at rejected! Transformation and conversion for us Christians come out of our response to GOD – Jesus is always standing at the door, knocking and seeking our attention to move us to personal wholeness! When we open and embrace Jesus we are able to be part of GOD’s grace and healing our lives and to those around us.

We have 2 lessons this morning as we are working our way through Kings and Luke:

## **Hearing the Word**

### **2 Kings 5:1-14 (The Voice Bible)**

5 Naaman’s master considered him an extraordinary man. He was the military commander of Aram’s army, and he had won *many important battles* for Aram by the power of the Eternal. Naturally he was greatly esteemed by his king. Naaman was a fierce warrior, but he also had a skin disease. <sup>2</sup> Now *one time*, the Arameans went out in raiding parties and took a little girl from Israel as their prisoner. The little girl became a servant to Naaman’s wife.

**Girl (to Naaman’s wife):** <sup>3</sup> If only my master could be near the prophet in Samaria, the prophet there could heal my master’s disease.

<sup>4</sup> Naaman *became hopeful, and he went and told his king what the little girl from Israel said.*

**King of Aram:** <sup>5</sup>I am going to write a letter to Israel's king, and I want you to take it to him immediately.

Naaman left *with the king's letter in his hand, plus 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of fine clothing.* <sup>6-</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Naaman handed the letter to Israel's king, and the king read it.

**King of Aram's Message:** The man carrying this letter is my servant, Naaman. He has a skin disease, and I request that you heal him.

**King of Israel** (*ripping his clothing*): Who does he think I am—God? Why does Aram's king think I have the power to kill and make alive again? What *in the world* makes him think that I can heal you of your disease? It is obvious that Aram's king is trying to create trouble between us.

<sup>8</sup> Elisha, the man of God, received word that Israel's king had ripped his clothing, so he sent a message to Israel's king.

**Elisha's Message:** What has caused you to rip your clothing? Tell the man *who has come to you for healing* to come to me. Then he will be assured that a prophet lives in Israel.

<sup>9</sup> *The king told Naaman to go find Elisha, so Naaman showed up at Elisha's door with his horses and chariots.* <sup>10</sup> Elisha *did not show his face to Naaman, but instead* sent instructions: "Wash yourself in the Jordan River seven times. *The waters will heal you, and your skin will be back to normal. You will be cleansed.*"

<sup>11</sup> Naaman boiled with anger as he left Elisha. *He had come to his house expecting something much different.*

**Naaman:** *What is this!* I came here thinking that Elisha would come outside and call upon the name of the Eternal One his God,

and that Elisha's hand would pass over my sores and heal my skin disease, *not the waters of the Jordan River*.<sup>12</sup> The Abanah and Pharpar Rivers in Damascus are greater rivers than all the rivers of Israel *combined*, so why couldn't I just go bathe in those and be healed?

Naaman then stormed away, boiling with anger.<sup>13</sup> Later his servants approached and spoke to him *with respect*.

**Naaman's Servants:** Father, if the prophet had told you to do some important thing, wouldn't you have done what he asked? Why is it difficult for you *to follow his instructions* when he tells you, "Bathe *yourself in the Jordan River*, and be cleansed"?

<sup>14</sup> So Naaman *swallowed his pride*, walked down to the Jordan River, and washed himself seven times, just as the man of God had instructed him to do. *There, the miracle occurred*. Naaman's *disease* was healed: his skin was as new as an infant's, and he was clean *from the disease*.

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Here in 2 Kings, we have the great commander Naaman who has terrible skin condition (some think Hansen's disease or leprosy). Sickness is a great leveler (*making everyone all equal and takes away all distinctions based on status or privilege*)! Naaman is a very powerful man and his skin condition has changed his life; Naaman's skin disease is not life-threatening but is serious enough for Naaman to talk story with his king. It also is a critical situation so that Naaman does pay attention to a lowly slave girl in his household. It is this young Israelite girl who tells him about the **Prophet Elisha** and suggests he goes to Israel to be cured.

So Naaman goes to Israel with his entourage and the King of Aram sends along lots of very expensive gifts as a peace offering; and Naaman goes to Elisha's house.

- ✓ Elisha treats this great General of the Army as a regular person.
- ✓ Elisha doesn't come out to greet the General outside his door.
- ✓ Elisha sends his servant to tell and give instructions to this VIP person outside his house—Naaman is to go to the local river and wash 7 times! And the servant closes the door.

As you can image—Naaman is furious!

- ✓ What an insult! Wow!
- ✓ Naaman is a 5-star general of the army! Naaman is a great man **but** he is still hung up on his own pitiful and pathetic power and prestige.
- ✓ Naaman is at the mercy of Almighty GOD for his healing and GOD works through the lowly and regular people around him—and Naaman doesn't get it—yet.
- ✓ Naaman's servant again helps Naaman to follow through what Elisha instructed him to do.

So Naaman does go to the local river complaining, grumbling and muttering all the way in and out of the river dipping himself 7 times!

Naaman is healed! At the end of verse 14 we are told that Naaman's skin got restored to the skin of "a young boy."

- ✓ Naaman is converted and transformed and made new!
- ✓ Naaman's attitude is transformed!
- ✓ Naaman's body, heart, and soul are transformed!
- ✓ Naaman is convinced that there is no god as great as the GOD of Israel!

**On to our Luke 10 lesson:**

## **Luke 10:1-11** (The VOICE Bible)

<sup>1</sup> The Lord then recruited and deployed 70 more disciples. He sent them ahead, in teams of two, to visit all the towns and settlements between them and Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> This is what He ordered.

**Jesus:** There's a great harvest waiting in the fields, but there aren't many good workers to harvest it. Pray that the Harvest Master will send out good workers to the fields.

<sup>3</sup> It's time for you *70* to go. I'm sending you out *armed with vulnerability*, like lambs walking into a pack of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Don't bring a wallet. Don't carry a backpack. I don't even want you to wear sandals. Walk along *barefoot, quietly*, without stopping for small talk. <sup>5</sup> When you enter a house seeking lodging, say, "Peace on this house!" <sup>6</sup> If a child of peace—one who welcomes God's message of peace—is there, your peace will rest on him. If not, don't worry; nothing is wasted. <sup>7</sup> Stay where you're welcomed. *Become part of the family*, eating and drinking whatever they give you. You're my workers, and you deserve to be cared for. Again, don't go from house to house, <sup>8</sup> but settle down in a town and eat whatever they serve you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick and say to the townspeople, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

<sup>10</sup> Of course, not every town will welcome you. If you're rejected, walk through the streets and say, <sup>11</sup> "*We're leaving this town. We'll wipe off the dust that clings to our feet in protest against you. But even so, know this: the kingdom of God has come near.*"

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### **Luke 10:**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of the 12 disciples going on a missionary journey—but Luke is the only one that tells of the sending of the 70 (or 72).

At this point in Luke's Gospel, Jesus has now made his famous turn towards Jerusalem (we said that last week Luke 9:51) and toward all that waited for him in the rest of Luke. The cost of following Jesus was just detailed and stated out!

**Jesus is here to proclaim that the Kingdom of GOD is near!**

Jesus then authorizes the 70/72 band of disciples to go out to the neighborhoods:

- ✓ Go and bring shalom and peace to all who will listen and receive it!
- ✓ Go and proclaim that the Kingdom of God is new you!
- ✓ Go and proclaim a whole new way to live, a whole new way to look at life and this world – all of it – the whole “ball of wax” – every jot and all the small pieces of your existence!

Because—in the Kingdom of GOD

- ✓ You cannot “play” at it!
- ✓ You don't dabble and experiment and try in the Kingdom!
- ✓ You don't treat the Kingdom like a salad bar at which you're free to choose just some items to put on your salad plate but leave all the items that don't look good or to your liking—or those items that might challenge your palette to experience something new—something new but perhaps necessary and good for you!

The point here in Luke 10:21ff of Jesus' teaching us is that **everybody** (next Sunday's message with Dr. Fuz Rana) is your neighbor who deserves aloha!

Even when Jesus tells his disciples to “wipe the dust” of the offending town off their feet—Jesus still tells them and reminds them that “the Kingdom of God is near!”

## **Doing the Word**

So what is the Word of God for us this morning?

### **1. ONE: GOD'S ALOHA AND POWER OFTEN SURPRISES US!**

- ✓ GOD use people around us to challenge and transform us—sometimes people we don't know.
- ✓ Sometimes taking a dip in the dirty river lets to surprising outbreaks of GOD's power!
- ✓ Sometimes the solution to our problems is right in front of us—personally and as a church!
- ✓ A question of all of us—what simple remedies for our problems lie right in front of us—forgotten, ignored, or avoided?
- ✓ Are our life choices and behaviors opening us and others to Christ or are they standing in the way of GOD's generously given abundance?!
- ✓ Let's not succumb and give in to the ways of the world—in/out; winner/loser; privilege/marginalized; us/them—and decline in numbers, energy, and positive influence

### **2. TWO: LIVE OUT YOUR VOCATION—GOD'S CALLING FOR YOU!**

- ✓ Your work is not about your success or achievement—but your faithfulness to GOD and the well-being of those whom you serve!
- ✓ If people treat you as a spiritual rock star—be faithful and allow the power of GOD flow through you to others to deepen and transform their lives and their family.
- ✓ If people turn their back on you, disrespecting and ridiculing you—continue on your journey—letting go of any sense of failure or desire for revenge!



### **3. THREE: OUR OPENNESS TO CHRIST ENABLES US TO BE “NEW EVERY MORNING” LIVING OUT GOD’S NEW CREATION IN EXCITING, SURPRISING & LIFE-TRANSFORMING WAYS!**

- ✓ Christ is the one who sends us out!
- ✓ Our instructions come from Jesus
- ✓ **Verses Luke 10:17-20 – the important part here for us to remember is that GOD knows treasures you!**
- ✓ **THERE IS JOY WITH AND IN GOD!**

#### **Sent in the Word**

Clearly—our GOD is a good GOD!

Our 2 passages this morning have reminded us of that!

Whatever we are facing today or tomorrow—we are reminded again and again—the individually or collectively—GOD always offers to us solutions; we **can** rise up from difficult waters healed and refreshed!

St. Teresa of Avilla said these famous words reminding all of us that now we carry on the ministry that Jesus gave us:

- ✓ **Christ has no body on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours!**
- ✓ **Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out to the world!**
- ✓ **Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good!**
- ✓ **Yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless others!**

