

## Archive for July, 2016

July 27th, 2016

### **"Some Great Thing"**

One of my favorite Bible stories is the drama of Naaman the leper. The drama is filled with a unique cast of actors. Naaman was a valiant warrior. The list of his accomplishments was great but it ends with one telling line – he was a leper.

The little maid of Israel who was captured and sold as a slave never forgot her God. In the midst of her less than ideal situation she exercises great grace and compassion. She tells her mistress if only captain Naaman would go to Israel the prophet would cure him. There is no mention of take me with you, set me free (poor me) but a genuine love and concern for someone else.

Naaman goes to his king. The king writes a letter to the king of Israel. "Here is Naaman. Cure him." There is a sense of loyalty that the king of Aram has for his commander. Naaman brings the letter to the king of Israel. Panic! "Who am I to cure him? Aram just seeks a quarrel." The man who is king over God's people (the God of the people he is over) frets himself.

Elisha the prophet hears about Naaman and says to the king, "Send him to me so that all may know that there is a prophet of the Almighty in Israel." I am sure that the very human king, Joram, lets out a big sigh – "Great! It will now be the prophet's problem." Power, position, prestige do nothing for Joram because without faith he is worse off than the lowliest shepherd.

Naaman is happily on his way. He arrives at the prophet's house with all of his entourage. He is used to command, to being obeyed, to deference. His servant announces his presence and out comes a messenger. Naaman waits, wondering where is the prophet? Then the messenger speaks the words of the prophet to Naaman. "Go wash in the Jordan seven times and you will be cleansed."

Why didn't the prophet come out? Elisha did not fulfill the expectations of Naaman. Why do God's servants sometimes not fulfill the

expectations of others? Elisha was God's servant not Naaman's. It wasn't about the prophet but about God.

Now we have Naaman sputtering with anger and indignation. "I thought the prophet would at least come out – wave his arms around or something. I have better rivers at home to wash in." And he was leaving. Fortunately, for Naaman, he knew how to pick wise servants. "My father," they began "If the prophet had told you to do 'some great thing' would you not have done it?"

So, this is our Montessori question. If God had asked you to do some great thing would you have not done it? Now, here is our irony. God has asked us to do "some great thing." It presents itself every day in the environment – the shepherding of life changing transformation.

Naaman dips in the Jordan. He is physically transformed. He goes back to the prophet. When his gifts are not accepted or needed, he then asks for something. "Since there is nothing I can give for this transformation grant me two mules worth of dirt so I might make sacrifice and pray to the God of Israel." This is his spiritual transformation. I am not sure how the next part of the narrative works. (As purists and perfectionists we have trouble with less than perfection and purity which is a good reminder for the classroom – to look for excellence rather than perfection.)

Naaman says, "I ask for forgiveness when I will have to go to the temple of Rimmon with the king, to lend my arm and support. May the Lord forgive your servant. I know who is the God of all creation."

I am always challenged by the alluring call of doing "some great thing" when I already have "some great thing" in front of me – in the classroom. We are already doing "some great thing" to the great pleasure of our Heavenly Father.