

February 15, 2009
 Messiah
 Epiphany 6 – B

II Kings 5:1-14
Wash and be Clean

Introduction

1. In South Carolina there is an Artesian well that is believed to heal all kinds of ailments
 - a. Legend has it, that even before European settlers, the Indians considered the waters sacred and bathed in them for healing
 - b. Then there's the legend of four mortally wounded British soldiers at the time of the American Revolution...
 - c. These soldiers were left in the care of two other soldiers
 - d. The four died and were buried
 - e. But six months later – all six returned to their post in Charleston, claiming it was the healing waters of these springs that brought these four back to life
2. For ages – it is believed that various pools or springs bring healing
3. And so – is that what's going on in our Old Testament Reading today – just another magic curing pool of water?
4. Or could it be more?
5. Could the incident with Naaman even be a foreshadow of Holy Baptism, and the healing power of Christ?
6. And could it be that if the waters of Baptism have so much healing power in them – that it is not only the body that is healed, but the soul?!

I. About 850 years before Christ – one of the major countries affecting Israel was Syria – not necessarily a friend of Israel

- A. In the Syrian Army, there was a commander whose name was Naaman
 - i. Amongst his own people – he was great, and in high favor with those above him
 - ii. But he was a Gentile – which meant he was not a Jew, he was not an Israelite
 - iii. This made him a foreigner, not considered one of God's holy and called people, from the line of Father Abraham
- B. Naaman is very much in the position as we are
 - i. We may think we are great in our home, or have high positions at work, we live in a “super-power” country...
 - ii. And yet – we are Gentiles, foreigners of the kingdom of God
 - iii. In our sinfulness – we have broken our ties with God, and we are aliens from the kingdom of God
 - iv. Generational studies show that our teenagers and people in their 20's have this sense of “entitlement” – that they are entitled, or deserve, all that they WANT

- v. Now, while these young people are very misguided, we are all in the same situation – we are not entitled to heaven, we do not deserve eternal life with God...
- vi. All that has been broken, and we are Gentiles separated from God in our sins

II. **Naaman had a disease – leprosy**

- A. To the Israelites, anyone who had leprosy was “sinful and unclean”
 - i. This was a terrible disease – it began to eat away at the body
 - ii. Those who had leprosy were forced to live in leper colonies – a cesspool of disease and sickness, infection and death
 - iii. Naaman’s high standing would soon come crashing down, he would become nothing, with no respect, no honor, no dignity
 - iv. This is also true of the man in our Gospel Reading, coming to Jesus, who also had leprosy
- B. Our sinful condition is so similar to leprosy!
 - i. Sin had left us unclean
 - ii. Our sins make us dirty with guilt, and death, and hell
 - iii. Worse than being a Gentile, we are also lepers – that separates us from God, and the ultimate leper colony is hell
 - iv. Sin destroys us – it takes away all our respect, and honor, and dignity – and leaves us only cursed and separated eternally from God

III. **And so, with this awful disease, through the words of a Jewish servant girl, Naaman heads off for Israel in order to be cured**

- A. Naaman’s leader and master was in favor of Naaman going to Israel to be cured
 - i. But obviously – they were thinking this would cost a lot of money
 - ii. I mean, think of being cured today, with treatments, and medications, doctor bills, and radiation – to be healed today is very costly
 - iii. And so Naaman goes to Israel with silver and gold to pay for his healing
- B. The disease of our sin, the separation we have with God, to escape the fires of hell – how much does this all cost?
 - i. Do we have enough gold to pay God? Do we have enough silver to give Him?
 - ii. To be healed from sin – no amount of money or goods could buy
 - iii. It takes a special payment to buy us back from our separation from God, it takes a costly payment to buy us back from our sins, it takes a precious payment to buy us back from hell

- iv. This payment we CANNOT pay – but Jesus Christ can and does!
- v. The payment is His own precious blood, blood from the veins of God is payment to cure us – and only this payment can save us

IV. Let's go back to Naaman – he's not very happy with the way things are going

- A. The king didn't want his money, and wouldn't have anything to do with him
- B. But then, Naaman hears word that a prophet in the country, Elisha, might see him
 - i. But when Naaman gets to the house of Elisha, hospitality there seems a little cold
 - ii. Naaman brought all his money, his horses, his chariots – and stood outside Elisha's door, but Elisha wouldn't see him
 - iii. Elisha sent a message – “Go tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times, and his flesh shall be restored, and he shall be clean”
- C. This didn't make Naaman very happy – a man in a foreign land, with leprosy, and being treated like this...
 - i. Naaman goes away complaining – he was expecting this big show of magic, the prophet waving his hand, a ritual, a ceremony, something...
 - ii. And all he got was WORDS – the Word from the mouth of the prophet – go take a bath!
 - iii. What good would that do?
- D. Think about Baptism – when there is a baptism in church – what do you see?
 - i. Do you see big pageantry, a grand show, laser lights, loud crashes, confetti, waving of hands?
 - ii. Hardly – What gives Baptism ALL ITS POWER is simply the Word of God, even if it is whispered
 - iii. There may be ritual, liturgy, candles – but all that is needed is the Word (connected to the water)
 - iv. And the Word forgives sin, calls the one being baptized into the kingdom of God, and gives eternal life and salvation

V. Washing in the Jordan – Naaman wasn't too excited about this either

- A. If it took a river – than why not the rivers back home in Syria?
 - i. How could washing in a dirty river like the Jordan heal this life-altering disease?
 - ii. All of this seemed highly unorthodox to Naaman, and he wasn't going to do it!

- B. Washing in a font in order to be saved – seems hardly reasonable
- i. ?? In order to have our sins all taken away, to get in to heaven, you just need some of the water that comes from this stainless bowl poured over you?
 - ii. Yea – that's right! It's that easy! It's that miraculous!
 - iii. Water, connected with the Word of God – poured over sinners – heals, forgives, and washes away all our infirmities!
 - iv. God always uses simple elements to bring His holy work to His people
 1. How He puts forgiveness in simple bread and wine is beyond comprehension
 2. But even more so – How He can save us from the depths hell and take us to the glory of Heaven by means of a man beaten, spat upon, stripped, nailed to a cross, and dying!
 3. But it is not just water... it is not just bread and wine... it is not just a bloodied and dying man...
 4. It is GOD, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man – in these simple ordinary means in order to save His people!
 - v. If God said you could be saved by climbing the most difficult mountain, or by giving some great amount of money, or by going through some grueling test of skill or knowledge – we might think there's some validity in this salvation!
 - vi. And so – if He says salvation is in bread and wine, water, in a bloodied Jesus → is this any more the reason to doubt Him!?

VI. **Finally, Naaman, through some convincing, washed in the Jordan River**

- A. And as Naaman went into the Jordan and dipped seven times, according to the WORD of the prophet, to his amazement – Naaman was healed!
- i. All of his disease was washed away
 - ii. His flesh was restored not to a man, but as pure and perfect as the flesh of a little child – and Naaman became clean!
- B. This is what happened when you were baptized
- i. A bowl of water... the Word of God...
 - ii. And as you were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the ✕Son, and of the Holy Spirit – you were washed clean and made holy in the sight of God
 - iii. Your soul was restored! You became a brand new creation in Christ Jesus!
 - iv. You are no longer dirty with the sins that plague you, you are no longer held guilty for the sins of your youth, you are no longer accused...

- v. But you are forgiven, washed clean, and restored in Christ Jesus for all eternity!
- C. and one of the marvelous thing about Baptism, and being made new in Christ is this...
- i. Yes, our sins are washed away
 - ii. Salvation is granted
 - iii. But even with the diseases of our bodies, and the ailments of our minds –
 - iv. Baptism is deposited in us – and this shall be our cure when we are raised from the dead
 - v. Death will be healed, our bodies will be perfect, our souls will be spotless

Conclusion

1. We were Gentiles – now children of the Kingdom of God
2. We were dirty with sin – but now we are clean in salvation
3. We wondered how we could pay for our cleansing – but Christ has done it on the cross
4. We thought it was more complicated than this – but God's Word has made it easy
5. We thought water was too simple – but it was ingenious!
6. When you are feeling down, when you are guilty with sin, when you offend your neighbor, when your conscience is troubled...
7. Go to your baptism – for there is Christ Jesus –
8. In Him we are washed... and in Him we are clean! Amen.