

Reading for Monday in the Third Week of Lent

24th March 2025

First reading

2 Kings 5:1-15a

‘There were many lepers in Israel, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.’

In those days: Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favour, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.’ So Naaman went in and told his lord, ‘Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.’ And the king of Syria said, ‘Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.’

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, ‘When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.’ And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, ‘Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me.’

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.’ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.’ But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, ‘Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’ So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, ‘My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?’ So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, ‘Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.’

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 42(41):2. 3.; Psalm 43(42): 3. 4. R42(41):3

My soul is thirsting for the living God;

when can I appear before the face of God?

Like the deer that yearns for running streams,

so my soul is yearning for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for God, the living God;

when can I enter and appear before the face of God?

O send forth your light and your truth; they will guide me on.

They will bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

And I will come to the altar of God, to God, my joy and gladness.

To you will I give thanks on the harp,

O God, my God.

Gospel Acclamation

Cf. Psalm 130(129):5, 7

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

I wait for the Lord; I hope in his word.

For in him there is mercy and plentiful redemption.

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God.

Gospel

Luke 4:24-30

Jesus, like Elijah and Elisha, is not sent only to the Jews.

When Jesus came to Nazareth, he said to the people in the synagogue: ‘Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his home town. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.’ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up, and drove him out of the town, and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

Short reflection on the reading for today

Jesus challenges the rather narrow view that his townspeople of Nazareth had of God. Just as they felt that Jesus belonged to them, “Do here in your home town the things we heard you did in Capernaum,” so they felt that God belonged to the people of Israel. When Jesus reminded them of a couple of passages in the Scriptures where God seemed to favour the pagans over the Jewish people they did not like it, and in response they forcibly ejected Jesus out of Nazareth. His rejection in Nazareth anticipated his even more brutal rejection in Jerusalem. The people of Nazareth’s God was too small and Jesus was seeking to broaden their understanding of God. He wanted them to realize, in the words of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, that “God has no favourites.” The God of Jesus was more generous, more expansive, more inclusive than people realized. Jesus was always trying to show people that there was much more to God than they imagined. He is more like the father in the parable of the prodigal son than his is like the elder son. Jesus’ vision of God remains challenging for us today, but it is a vision of God that is fundamentally “good news” for all who are willing to receive it.