

Proper 9 (13)

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

July 7, 2019

2 Kings 5:1-14

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco Texas

Sermon Title: Annie and the Disciples

Thank you Sharlande and the committee for the invitation to preach.

The revised common lectionary facilitates the reading of Scripture in the church. Today they have provided us a treat. You see here is the problem. Many Christians say I want to read the entire Bible. They even start the process. But few get as far as Leviticus, sorry Bill Bellinger. But almost no one makes it all the way to the Books of Kings.

Bracketing Elisha

I imagine most of you have not heard the story of the nameless girl. The commentaries generally agree that this is a demonstration of prophetic power. In other words, this passage is about Elisha. This is a strange text to us. The stories of Elijah and Elisha consistently rehearse how God has touched these two men.

You probably caught the level of ethnocentrism. One commentator describes this as the conversion of Naaman. Notice how the writer manages the power relationships. For a season Syria and Damascus, the Arameans dominated the people of Israel and Samaria, the northern kingdom. Elijah and Elisha were considered persons of God but not persons of tact and diplomacy. Elisha does not even come out of his house. The passage is an example of power of prophecy story. But this morning we are going to look beyond Elisha.

Instead, we are going to look at the role of vulnerability in the stories.

It was late afternoon when watching television is the most brain engaging I could do I turned to Netflix and there was a lecture by Brené Brown. Preston had recommended her work to me, I think. Brown's Netflix lecture The Call to Courage, she talked about the show on CBS This Morning on the power of **vulnerability** and bravery. With this in mind, let's look again at 2 Kings 5.

Focusing the Women

The most **vulnerable** of the group the little servant girl. The term is qatonah naarah not ebed. She said "if only"

The catalyst of the story are two unnamed women the wife slave girl. A book many of you would love is Women in Scripture edited by Carol Meyers Part One is Named Women and the longer section is part two the unnamed women of the Bible. In that, part two, which includes an article on these two Wife and Servant Girl of Naaman. They have no names only expressions of ownership. Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch "An Israelite captive of war, who becomes her servant girl" obfuscates the brutality of the times and the practice.

I love sermon titles. Today's title. Annie and the Disciples sounds like a pop group. I will let you draw the picture for yourself.

Let us take a moment and notice the unnamed little servant girl naarah qaton. It is easy to gloss over this terror. She kidnaped or stolen during a raid on Samaria. However, I want us to take a moment to sense the terror of that nonchalant observation. She was a stolen child. In antiquity, they stole children. In Texas, we must recognize that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century they stole children from Africa. During the so-called Indian wars once again, children were sometimes spoils of war, i.e. Quanah Parker. During the Holocaust, they stole children. Even today, human trafficking continues where children are stolen. Do not get caught in the terror that the story sometimes does not see but don't get lost in it.

That is why my mind went to Little Orphan Annie.

Kathy and I lived in Indiana for five years. A leading Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley wrote a poem initially titled "The Elf Child" in November 15, 1885 in the Indianapolis Journal Riley himself changed the name of the poem to Little Orphan Allie. You see Mary Alice "Allie" Smith was an orphan living in the Riley home during her childhood.

Allie was born in Liberty Union County Indiana. When she was nine her mother died. When she was ten her father dies or was incarcerated. Her uncle John Rittenhouse took the orphan to his home where he dressed her in black and Wikipedia quotes "bound her out to earn her room and keep." Captain Reuben Riley took her as bound servant to help his wife Elizabeth Riley the poet's mother.

Allie/Annie was in the first stanza, a well-behaved child. However, snatching still takes place but for Riley the bad children were snatched by goblins. A typesetting error shifted Allie to Annie.

From the poem sprang a character in a daily comic strip by Harold Gray in August 5, 1924. Annie, her dog Sandy and her benefactor Daddy Warbucks. A scant six years later Little Orphan Annie inspired a radio show. The first film adaptation was in 1932 and the latest 2014 with Quvenzhané Wallis in the title role opposite Jammie Foxx. In each of these renditions, the **vulnerable** Annie transforms the lives of others around her. However, do not let Annie's pluck cause us to overlook the brutality that created her as a character **vulnerable**. We must be open to it but not make it Disney cute.

Vulnerability of the Powerful

Who was Naaman? The story in some sense begins with him. He is on the one hand a *gebore hayil*, in Hebrew which we might translate as a "bad man."

The text in verse two wants to make the point that it is God, not Naaman who gave the Samaritans into the hands of the Arameans. Nonetheless, Naaman is a powerful and wealthy man of violence. But even he has a boss. Who lets him go to Samaria? The king.

Naaman takes lots of stuff to pay for the treatment: talents of silver, shekels of gold, and lots of clothes. You cannot pay your way to wholeness according to 2 Kings 5.

First, he goes to the king, who of course is worthless. This is not the king of Samaria's story. The prophet Elisha rescues the king and offers to ask God to heal him. Elisha does not even leave his house to serve Naaman. So Naaman goes to Elisha's house. He receives the instructions of the prophet and balks with

the privilege one might expect. But once again the servants prevail on him. He is healed. And the lectionary reading stop there.

Naaman is more like us than we might think. We bring stuff and prestige of our place in the community church etc. Hoping that it might go bail for the **vulnerable** fragility of our lives. of our lives.

Jesus and Annie: The Challenge of Vulnerability

Vulnerability. I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals..." (Luke 10:4)

If Bill were here, he would tell you about militant consumerism. He would tell you that the lie it tells is that we can mask our **vulnerability** with more stuff. You know Jesus and Annie leaders in vulnerability remind me of Rick Steves. You know Rick Steves the person from PBS who does the travel shows. Rick Steves has a packing list for a trip to Europe that easily fits into one small bag. But it is hard to listen to Rick amidst that call to pack for every possibility. Like Luke Skywalker we want to take our weapons, our stuff for the journey.

During this vacation season, we will often find ourselves taking too much stuff. The disciples then and now are facing the same challenge.

Brené Brown reminds us of a scene from the movie The Empire Strikes Back. Luke must enter a cave. Luke asks Yoda what is in the cave and Yoda replies "Only what you take with you." Therefore, Luke like many of us gears up like a scene in the movie Silverado, NCIS Los Angeles etc. Only to have Yoda comment. "your weapons , you will not need." (Rising Strong, p74)

It is not the stuff that we are tempted to use as protection, nor the stuff we use to make us feel worthy that will empower Christ ministry in us. It is the simple rucksack not the minivan packed full. Christ models for the disciples a disciple unlike the militant consumerism of our modern world.

Getting to the Table

A preaching professor at a Baptist seminary warned his students be careful standing between Baptist and lunch. In other words, how do we get to the table from here. But it is not the lunch table but the table of the Lord.

Sally Field movie Places in the heart has the communion where every person took part. We are created as vulnerable creatures it is what binds us. At Lake Shore all are welcome because we embrace our vulnerability.

You know there is a big thing in food today. They call it farm to table. These texts provide a meal for us. Vulnerability from farm off our lives and ministry in Jesus Christ to table of our lord.

1 Cor 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup ... You see the sovereign one took on vulnerability so that we might have life abundant. Not to forsake our vulnerability but rather to embrace. Not only to embrace it but to celebrate it.