

October 9, 2022

Proper 23 – Year C

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15

2nd Timothy 12:8-15c

Psalms 66: 1-11

Luke 17: 11-19

What have you wished for? At one time or another we have all wished for something – a small thing or something larger, that ONE THING – that we just could not do without. The wishes that sprang up at birthdays and Christmas. For me birthdays were tough – you did not get to do something easy like make out a list to mail to the North Pole, so you had to depend on dropping massive hints before the day – hoping beyond hope that your parents were smart enough to pick up on your not-so-subtle hints. Christmas was much easier – lists were almost a rite of passage at that time of year – you could either mail it to the frozen north, take it with you when you sat on Santa’s lap or leave it in obvious places around the house. Again, hoping it would be found and acted upon.

Now there are times and places when a wish list doesn’t fit the bill or there was a time before such a thing was even known. Wishes were more private.

Namaan wanted only one thing – had only one wish. He wished to be cured of his leprosy. He learned where he might find a cure and set off with a letter of introduction from his king and riches in gold and silver. But the king of Israel was not the one to help him. Unexpectedly he was directed to the prophet Elisha – not a healer but a man of God. But his solution was too simple. Elisha didn’t even leave his house but sent a messenger out to Naaman with instructions to bathe in the Jordan 7 times. Naaman was irate – Elisha had not even left his house and asked him to do something too easy. Is this familiar? How often have we been faced with a simple solution to a problem – something that needs fixing and needs only a simple part not a plumber or appliance repair man. The solution does not need to be overwhelming. Don’t be fooled by simplicity. Solutions don’t need waving of hands, incantations, and magic potions. All that may be needed is a simple prayer – this is the problem Lord, help me find a solution, answer my prayer. We tend to make things more difficult than they need to be.

Jeremiah said it well when he repeated God's promise to the people of Israel – when you get serious me, I will not disappoint you. I will not forget you – I will turn things around for you.

God will hear OUR prayers and answer.

Another encounter with lepers appears in Luke's gospel. 10 of them meet Jesus as he travels to Jerusalem. They find him near the border between Galilee and Samaria. These lepers differ from Naaman because they recognize someone who can help them. A man from God who can cure. Again, there are no wild bodily motions, no incantations, no calling demons to leave, no requirements for extraordinary acts. Only a simple instruction – go, show yourselves to the priests. No word about what will happen when they get there, no word on what the priests will do. Obeying Jesus was all that was needed to heal them – they did not need to even get as far as the temple to be healed. They did the one thing that was asked of them – they obeyed Jesus. They believed and followed his instructions. Belief and following Jesus is all that is asked of us.

We need to be like the one who returned to give thanks. To recognize God's help and give thanks. In fact, it is the one question that Jesus asks of the Samaritan – where are the other nine? Could they not come back and give gratefulness to God?

Prayers of gratefulness are one of the most important ways for us to connect with a living God. How many times have our prayers been answered when we have not even asked for something. When we have received a blessing without a request. Our response should always be thanksgiving and gratefulness.

Remember Jeremiah – God will not disappoint us, will not forget us, will turn things around for us. All we need to do is acknowledge him and follow him.

Amen