Spirituality
Sunday Resources
Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



A view of the Jordan River in 2019 (Wikimedia Commons/Bahnfrend)



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Today's Liturgy of the Word starts with part of a great story. In 1 Kings 5, we hear about a military commander named Namaan, a little girl captive and the prophet Elisha. When Naaman contracts a skin disease, the child tells Namaan's wife that there's a prophet in Israel who can heal him. Amazingly, the proud and powerful Namaan decided that it would be worth seeking the prophet.

So, he headed off with an overabundance of luxurious gifts for the prophet Elisha. The fearful king of Israel could see nothing good coming from the incident, worrying that it was just a provocation from Namaan's king.

Elisha told him not to worry. When the ostentatious entourage arrived at his door, Elisha didn't even bother to come out. He simply sent a message telling the commander to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. Having expected something much more spectacular, Namaan was ready to leave in anger — fulfilling the fears of the king of Israel.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 12, 2025

2 Kings 5:14-17
Psalm 98
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

Enter Namaan's servants to persuade him to get over himself and follow the prophet's prescription. He humbly took his sevenfold plunge and came out thoroughly cured. When Elisha refused his copious gifts, Namaan carried soil from Israel back to his land to worship the God of Israel from his home. Healing and conversion, all in a tale that warmed the hearts of Israelites who wanted others to honor their God.

Those who compiled our lectionary chose this story to accompany the one of Jesus with 10 people who had leprosy. As Jesus met this small group at the entrance to a town, they cried out for mercy, a word that connotes not just compassion but

genuine solidarity with those who need help. Merciful people make others' needs their own and will do anything possible to alleviate them.

Feeling the pain of the afflicted people, Jesus did nothing more than tell them to go and show themselves to the priest. As they journeyed into town, they noticed that, like Namaan, they had been cured. So, they did what Jesus had told them to do — all but one of them went to show themselves to the priest.

The outlier was a Samaritan. As he walked along, he experienced something more than a cure. Forgetting about the priest, he ran back to Jesus, glorifying God and thanking Jesus profusely. Jesus, in one of the few instances in which we hear him complain, asks about the others. "Were they not all made clean?" Yes. But the one who returned saw more in the incident than a simple return to a clear complexion.

The Samaritan received a miracle. He experienced God's work of healing, of mending what was broken, of comforting an outcast. The Samaritan experienced the miracle of a new healed and healing outlook on life. He could now believe and proclaim that suffering and sadness are not God's will. He had experienced the mercy of God, God among us, God taking on our burdens. He saw much more than others around him and that led him to burst with praise and joy and gratitude.

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Yes, Jesus was disappointed. It's not that he was looking for acclaim, he wanted others to perceive what his mercy meant. His mercy extended to anyone who asked; the nine missed the depth of what Jesus had given them. Disappointed, but probably not surprised, Jesus knew that he was offering more than many could take in.

In the mid-1800s, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote the poem "Aurora Leigh," which included the following lines:

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> and every common bush afire with God:
> but only he who sees, takes off his shoes;
> the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

The Samaritan perceived the fire of God in his experience with Jesus. From then on, nothing would be the same. Namaan underwent a humbling and healing experience that left him worshiping Israel's God. Both found more than they expected, because they were open to seeing more than they expected.

Today, it's as if Christ were standing before us, begging us to open our eyes. In response, we can ask ourselves, "What is there to see that I am missing — be it on purpose or because of low expectations? Is my hope too limited? Might my vision be too small or overly centered on me and mine? How can I open my eyes to perceive God's action among us?"

There's a lot more than blackberries all around us. Seeing more will change us, more of God's good and suffering world will invade our being. Are we willing to ask for solidarity with Christ and to know and share his mercy?