

Proper 9  
Cycle C RCL

2 Kings 5:1-14

The Deuteronomistic historian (Dtr) has adapted this miracle story to the themes of the great historical work: Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, in which it now occurs. In 2 Kings 5:1-14 Israel and Aram (Syria) live in an uneasy truce with Aram making raids into the Golan Heights to harrass the Israelites. It is from one of these raids (*nedudim*, “incursions”) that the young girl of marriageable age (*na'arah*) was captured and brought into the household of Naaman (5:2). She knows of a “prophet who is in Samaria” (5:3) who could cure the master's skin disease (*metsorah*, a skin disease of some kind, *not* Hansen's Disease). An important play on the preposition *lifney* (“in front of” or “before”) anticipates the rest of the story. Naaman was a “great man *and in high favor with his master*, (NRSV, emphasis mine). The words in italics are a translation of the single word *lifney*. The captive young woman is “*lifney* the wife of Naaman (5:2), meaning “in the service of the wife of Naaman.” Finally this young woman wishes that her master could be “*lifney* the prophet who is in Samaria (5:3).” That is just what the “great man” is unwilling to do until his servants convince him that he should try the remedy, *i. e.* that Naaman should obey the prophet (as a servant might obey a master,

Psalm 30

This *thanksgiving* psalm recapitulates the original lament which the psalmist prayed to ask for deliverance in verses 8-10. The danger from which he asked relief was the danger of death, expressed here in terms of descent into the underworld, Sheol. The deepest part of Sheol is called “the Pit” (*Abaddon*). Having been saved from death, the psalmist returns to the Temple to offer the promised sacrifice and public acclamation of God’s faithfulness.

Isaiah 66:10-14

Our reading is from the so-called Third Isaiah whose work predominates in Isaiah 56-66. Third Isaiah concerns itself with the life of those who returned to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus II in 539 BCE; and Isaiah 66:10-14 develops the image of the restored Jerusalem as the mother of all the faithful who dwell in her. Those faithful will suckle at her breast (verse 11), she will play with them (verse 12), and they will receive comfort from her (verse 13). The result of this motherly care is to fortify Jerusalem's children in such a way as to make the other nations afraid to attack the city or her people (verse 14).

Psalm 66:1-8

Psalm 66 is a composite psalm. Verses 1-11, comprise a *hymn*, and verses 12-18 are an *individual thanksgiving*. Although hymns normally praise God for God’s cosmic power or power over nature, a minority of hymns, including this one, celebrate God’s saving deeds in Israel’s history. Thanksgivings are prayers offered when God has answered the lament of a worshiper by helping the worshiper out of distress. In the present case the psalmist says that he is now paying the vow he made on the occasion of his lament (verse 12). In addition to offering the promised burnt offerings (verse 12), the psalmist now calls the congregation to hear how God answered him in the midst of trouble (verses 14-18). Such a confession enhances God’s public reputation (“name”) as one who saves those who serve him.

(Galatians 6: (1-6) 7-16

Whatever the exact nature of the difficulty Paul addressed in Galatians, it is clear that his opponents boasted of their circumcision as well as of their spiritual powers. Paul, by contrast, is content to boast only of Christ crucified (6:14). Only the death of Jesus brings into being the new creation of God's kingdom (verse 15).

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

The sending out of seventy (or seventy-two, as some texts read) to bear witness to Jesus is a variant of the tradition of the commissioning of the twelve in 9:1-6 and reflects the author's view that the mission of the Gospel beyond the confines of Palestinian Judaism goes back to Jesus himself. The number seventy is a traditional number (Exodus 24:1, 9; Numbers 11:16) for reasons that are no longer clear to us.

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