



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

THIRD WEEK OF LENT – MONDAY 2 Kings 5: Naaman

This is one of the great stories and could fill a book with its implications. Backdrop...Naaman, great military commander of Syrian enemy hordes. World at his feet but diseased and unsightly. Young slave-girl of his household, a captured Jew, tells him he can be healed in Israel. Pitches up at court with this news/demand. King of Israel is distraught, thinks Big N is looking for a casus belli. Elisha summons Naaman to his 'ashram' then, without even the courtesy of seeing him, sends out instructions, via his servant, to bathe seven times in the Jordan. Naaman hopping mad at discourtesy and ridiculous instruction. Bathe in this pathetic trickle? Syria has great rivers for a great man to bathe in ! Servant reminds his boss that if he had been instructed to do something great he would not have hesitated. And lots more beside...

Today I just want you to note the various understated examples of courage and faith here.

First the slave-girl. Presumably she was captured by Naaman in a raid on her town. Yet she is still compassionate to the man who has ruined her life. If her advice turns out to be wrong then she would surely be in for a beating at best. Then the prophet...the brutal warrior pitches up at your cave and you don't pay court to him, in fact you don't even have the courtesy to meet him. You humiliate him by dealing through your servant. The instructions are, frankly, the 'tin lid' in humbling the great man.

Then Naaman's servant who, approaching the warrior lord in his full fury, dares to suggest that he accept the advice and humble himself.

The risk to any of these three was massive.....but they each take it because they have faith and because, regardless of his history, they have compassion on the great warlord. A natural human reaction of his slave-girl and Elisha might have been to say that Naaman's illness was no more than he deserved.

Lastly, Naaman has to have the humility to do as he is told. As an army commander he knows the power of authority and, risking looking a fool, is finally obedient.

The upshot is that he is cured and comes to believe in the One true God. In earnest of this he takes a waggon load of soil back with him to Syria so that, after he has accompanied his king to morning prayer in the pagan temple, he can kneel on the soil of Israel and worship the Lord of Lords who has delivered him. Great story.

Spiritual exercise: Of course we all want to do great things for God. What are the small things He has asked you to do that you keep avoiding?