

A Reasonable Response Third Week of Lent Monday, February 29, 2016 8:15 AM
2 Kgs 5:1-15ab; Lk 4:24-30 (Pride becomes of very tyrannical master, and one that keeps us in slavery.)

“When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury.”

Well, the first thing in understanding this gospel story is to ask oneself the question: why were these people filled with fury? **What did Jesus say that was infuriating? He simply was observing the facts:** prophets are not accepted in their own native place. Why should that make anyone angry, just observing this fact? That’s the question we have to have in our mind.

Now what would be a reasonable response to this discourse? The reasonable response to this discourse would be to say, well, **what was it about this widow in Sidon?** What was special about her? Why was Elijah sent to her? That would be a reasonable question. And the answer was that this woman, although very, very poor, was also **very generous and willing to share the little she had with the prophet.** She was, you will remember, running out of flour and oil, and she was actually ready to die of starvation when her last cakes of bread were gone; but still willing to share. What about Naaman? **What was so special about Naaman?** Well, Naaman was the leader of a great army, and yet he was humble. **He was humble enough to listen to the advice of his own slaves.** That was not typical. Masters are masters, and masters know and masters tell. They don’t listen. Naaman wasn’t your typical master or your typical general. He was a humble man, **and he was open.** He was open to the word of a slave girl from Israel that, yes, there is hope, yes, there is a God, yes, there is a way. And he listened.

Now the king of Aram and the king of Israel were both completely clueless. The king of Aram did not listen to what Naaman told him. Naaman told him what the slave girl said, is that there was a prophet in Samaria that could cure him. But that’s not what the king of Aram heard. He sent Naaman to the king of Israel, as if, well, it’s a matter of power; this is a matter of

authority. If there is any power in Israel, it must belong to the king. This is a kind of blindness. The king of Israel was also clueless. He didn't even think of Elisha the prophet if he had even heard of him. The slaves knew about him, but the king seemed to be oblivious. This is often the way it is. So **Naaman was cured because of his humility, because of his willingness to listen and respond simply, to do a little something in cooperation with the word of God.**

That would've been a reasonable reflection on Jesus' little discourse, but that's not what the people did. **They just reacted, identifying no doubt with all those people who were not cured, and angry about that, and all those widows who were not helped at the time of Elijah.** How we identify, how we classify ourselves! And so, in a way, they are saying that God is very unfair. What God ought to be doing is taking care of us. We are the chosen ones. As Jesus was simply speaking the truth, they had to get rid of him, a foreshadowing, a foreshadowing of what would eventually happen as he continues to teach and to speak the truth wherever he went, and to share the love and compassion of God wherever he went. **Just because God is compassionate and forgives all sins doesn't mean all sins are forgiven because people have to accept it.** Here we see some people don't. And pride becomes of very tyrannical master, and one that keeps us in slavery.