

Let us not grow weary...
2 Kings 5:1-14; Galatians 6:7-10, 14-16
July 4, 2010

“⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all...”

One of my favorite Negro spirituals is entitled **“Walk Together Children”** and its lyrics go like this:

Walk together children
Don' you get weary
Walk together children
Don't you get weary
Oh, talk together children
Don't you get weary
There's a great camp meeting in the promised land

Sing together children
Don' you get weary
Sing together children
Don't you get weary
Oh, shout together children
Don't you get weary
There's a great camp meeting in the promised land

Gwineter mourn and never tire
Mourn and never tire
Mourn and never tire
There's a great camp meeting in the Promised Land

A song sung from the **depths of the souls of those who were enslaved** and yet were able to cling to the hope and promises of God that one day they would be free. In the midst of the most **trying of any human circumstance they encouraged** one another to not grow weary.

In today's reading from our Hebrew texts we have a very powerful man, Naaman, growing weary. Our **lesson tells us that he had leprosy and was desperate** to be cured. What is strange about this text is that we have both Naaman and his King, those in power, listening to the guidance of his wife's slave girl, one who was oppressed. A girl who is nameless and who appears, **at least on the outside, to be powerless holds the power or the wisdom** as to what

would in fact cure Naaman of that which diseased him. **Her power came from her faith.** Saying to Naaman's wife, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy." (2Kgs. 5:3) **A slave girl who could have easily made the decision** to allow the man who had enslaved her to die, but she did not. Instead of being weary and downtrodden by her circumstances she made the decision to speak up and save the life of Naaman. She looked **beyond herself and did what God would have her to do.** She lived her faith out loud.

Naaman and his King seemed to have only gotten part of what she had said to them, however, because Naaman took with him on his journey to meet with Elisha quite a large sum of money and gifts as if to buy his cure. He thought surely with his status and his money he would receive an **audience by this prophet and be cured.** Sounds a lot like some of the people in our society today doesn't it? If you have money and health insurance you do not have to wait until your illness is so grave that you have to be seen in the emergency room hoping that they give you free samples of the medications you need. If you have money you get the best lawyers and you are **less likely to go to jail or if you do get incarcerated** it is for a far shorter sentence than someone who is impoverished. If you have money you can live in better neighborhoods and not worry about the children who really are getting left behind in America's educational system. Naaman's attitude is a reflection of that which truly infects and infests our modern day society. Those in power versus **those who are oppressed by systems of injustice.** Arrogance, conceit, a sense of entitlement and superiority in the midst of other's suffering and oppression.

Naaman's sense of entitlement becomes even clearer when we see his response to Elisha's servant coming out to meet him and not Elisha. Naaman is enraged that a lowly servant is sent to speak to him. Didn't Elisha know how important a man he was? His arrogance and conceit is further **evidenced when he says the rivers of his homeland** are better than those of

the Jordan. He is within reach of curing himself but his pride and sense of superiority hinder him. **Now I know what some of you are perhaps thinking**, this guy is a jerk yes, but the bottom line is that he is also weary, frightened, and just wanted to be cured. Who wouldn't be a little terse in his condition? When we become weary in our journey sometimes it does not take much for us to doubt and treat others badly. **Yet, let us not forget the compassion and faith of those enslaved, the ones truly oppressed.** It was the voices of Naaman's servants, those who were beneath him, those who had kept the faith in the midst of their circumstance that said simply and rationally, "...if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would **you not have done it? How much more, when** all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean?'"(2Kgs. 5:13) Now we know the rest of the story. Following the recommendation of Elisha and conceding to his servants' wisdom, Naaman went to the Jordan and washed seven times in fact healing himself. He did what was right in letting go of his arrogance and he humbled himself because his servants chose to speak. Naaman was transformed because those around him, whose circumstances were just as grave as his own if not more so, chose to act upon their faith. They lived their **faith out loud at the risk of Naaman's anger, at the risk of being** beaten or worse for talking to their master – the one in power in such a way. Naaman's servants did not allow their circumstance or their weariness to keep them from doing the right thing.

“⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” **Who are the Naaman's in your life? Who are the ones** whose lives are waiting to be transformed if you choose to live your faith out loud? The ones who need for us, as God's children, to speak truth to power even in the midst of our own weariness and circumstance. Do you have friends, neighbors, coworkers that you would like to invite to church **but are in fear of offending them? Do you know someone** who tells off color jokes or gossips about others and you remain silent? Silence in the face of such behavior indicates complicity on our part. Have you chosen to remain silent in the wake of the BP oil disaster because you don't

live on the coast and so you believe this disaster does not impact you? Have you remained silent on the issue of immigration reform because in Stevens Point there are not as many immigrants as there are in Arizona or Texas? **Silence and passivity equals complicity.** Have you remained silent on the issue of marriage equality? Who are the Naaman's in your life and how is God leading you to speak and to act to transform the circumstance of others?

I know that it is not always easy to speak or to act. In Dallas I seized each opportunity that I had to participate in protests and marches for peace and for equal rights for my GLBT sisters and brothers, among other causes, even in the midst of the hate filled rants of those on the sidelines. **As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to go and do.** We are called to speak. I heard a minister, who is also a mother, ask this question at a seminar, "It is one thing to put my life on the line for justice issues, but I do not want to jeopardize the lives of my children in the process, **how does one find the right balance?"** **The presenter** responded by saying one must not be foolish when choosing to speak out, choose **carefully how you speak, but speak you must.** We must have faith that the God who loves us will in fact protect us from our enemies. There is a cost to discipleship. As followers of Jesus Christ we know that it is not for our benefit alone that we speak, that we act, or that we do. It is for the kin-dom building work that God calls **us too. It is for the greater good of community.**

¹⁰ *So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all...*" Let us not grow weary but walk together, talk together, shout together, and mourn together. We are called to **speak to and act in the lives of the Naamans we encounter** helping to transform them and transforming their circumstance. Let us not allow our weariness to deter us from doing that which is right, that which God calls us to. **There is a cost to discipleship, but** God stands with us in the kin-dom **building work of transforming our world** as we have been asked to do.

Amen.