
8 Monday

MONDAY Week 3 of Lent

2 Kings 5:1 – 15
Ps 41: 2,3 Ps 42: 3,4
Luke 4:24 - 30

It's amazing how prejudiced and self-important all of us human beings can be, personally, in our families and social groupings, in our feelings for birthplace, country and culture, even in our religion. Yet we can at the same time be so active and vocal on behalf of justice, freedom, equality, fairness.

Today's Old Testament scripture gives an example of how self-importance leads to silly prejudices and preconceptions. Naaman the Syrian army commander got angry at being told to wash in the Jordan river in order to be cleansed of his leprosy. He expected the man of God, Elisha, to perform some elaborate ceremony --- and besides, he thought the rivers of his own country were better rivers for cleansing. But we don't need the self-importance of a Naaman to have similar feelings ourselves, expectations of how God (or other people) should behave towards us, prejudices about foreigners, strangers, 'outsiders' of any kind. And of course we're usually quick enough to detect such attitudes in others.

The people of Nazareth were no better either. They got murderously angry at Jesus for daring to say that the Lord somehow favoured the 'outsider', Naaman, over lepers who lived in Israel. What might have seemed rather harmless prejudices and preconceptions led to something much uglier and dangerous.

The purifying time of Lent, and the remembrance of the cleansing baptism waters poured over us, may be an appropriate invitation to check on our own self-righteousness, if not self-importance. Uncover and cast away the lurking unjustified judgements we make in our hearts and minds, and the self-centred expectations we want others to fulfill. A pure heart create in me, O Lord.

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