

July 7, 2019

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Surprising Prophets

2 Kings 5:1-14

There once was a young woman who realized alcohol had become a problem in her life, and so she began to attend twelve step recovery meetings. There she found the courage and community she needed to get sober and healthy. But it wasn't always an easy path. In the early days, she explained to a sponsor at an AA meeting that she was getting stuck on her recovery every weekend when she washed her car, because she was accustomed to washing the car while drinking a beer.

"What am I supposed to do?" the young woman asked earnestly, expecting a wordy and complicated answer.

"Get an iced tea."

"What? I can't just drink iced tea instead! This is a serious problem!" The young woman protested. Surely there was something long and boring to read, an expensive workshop to attend, perhaps a complicated extra step devised just for her.

"If my idea was hard, would you do it? Just get the tea."

This is a human problem, not a modern one. People told this story way before we drank iced tea. Eons ago, there was this guy named Naaman who had a pretty good life. He was an advisor to the king on the winning side of a war. The only thing that bugged him was this terrible rash he had all over his body. A slave girl in his house, a prisoner of war from the enemy side, suggested he go visit the prophet from her side, the enemy side. It took some doing, but finally he heard from the great prophet himself. This was the message:

"Go and dip in the Jordan River seven times and you will be healed."

The Jordan River is little, muddy and unimpressive. Naaman was offended.

"Why should I bathe in this little stream? The rivers in my country are much grander than this one!"

He was about to storm off in a huff, when his advisors stopped him.

"Look, man, if it was difficult, wouldn't you do it? Just try."

He tried it. And he was healed.*

Are you looking for a complicated or expensive answer to each of life's simple problems? Maybe you are looking too hard. Maybe God's grace is right here, right now, waiting for you. Maybe the healing you seek is as simple as taking one step at a time into the river of life that is flowing right now past your door. Just this once, try this. Try immersing yourself in the powerful simplicity of God's healing grace.

This story is adapted from "Swim, Ride, Run, Breathe: How I Lost a Triathlon and Caught My Breath", by Jennifer Garrison Brownell, published by The Pilgrim Press, 2015.