

C Mowat - Gospel Worthing 15-09-19

It's a well-known story, it's a great story. The Old Testament in particular has full of great stories. I sometimes have the privilege of speaking to children in primary school, normally once a year, and they get a Bible, and I always ask them for their thoughts and views as to what the Bible is, and invariably someone answers that it's a book full of stories. And they are absolutely right.

And you might say, "Well, it's not a story about Jesus, and this is the gospel preaching and the preaching is about Jesus as a saviour." And I can tell you that is absolutely the case, the gospel tonight, make no mistake about it, is about one person and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Point Him out, and every gospel preacher, we should be pointing Him out tonight as the only name, the only name given under heaven whereby men must be saved.

But these Old Testament scriptures they give us a picture, they give us a story. And this is really a story about a sinner coming to know the saviour. So whilst it happened before, the birth of the Lord Jesus, I want us to read this not just as a story that happened a long time ago but to see that the characters on the story are alive and well today, and they will be in this room. Because everyone is represented when it speaks ... when we speak about the sinner as a position that we can all take. And that's what Naaman was.

Naaman was a great man; it says he was a great man before his master. And I understand from others that he's the only Gentile in the Bible that's described as a great man. We do have those that are described as mighty men, and he's described as a mighty man as well and he has a lot going for himself - he's a mighty man, he's got a good job, he's a man of Valour, he has been used by God whether he knew it or not to deliver his nation, he's a man held in high esteem, he has a lot going for him.

And maybe you have too, naturally speaking. And he has one big thing going against him, he's a leper. What is leprosy? Well, the medical condition I understand starts off with a red spot which turns white, then it scales, and then hair falling, and then nails fall off, and then it attacks the face and the nose is attacked and the gums and your teeth fall off, and then your limbs are attacked and they fall off, and eventually you succumb to the terrible, miserable lingering death of a leper.

Leprosy speaks to those who have sinned, speaks to those who have sinned, and what we read here is that Naaman was a sinner, and that's a position that each one of us, every person in Worthing, every person across this world tonight can take, that in our natural condition we are sinners before God, sinners before God.

Well, the story continues and we have the introduction of the second character to this story, a little maid, a little girl, a captive maid. She'd a lot of things going against her; naturally speaking she didn't have much going for her. I imagine she was taken from her family, from her friends, from her culture, from her country. And he or she is deposited as a slave; a young girl slave in the city of household, the lowest currency that you could possibly get would have been the word of this maid. We don't even know her name.

But you know what this little maid is, this little girl is? She's a preacher, and the preacher tonight whether he's here or elsewhere has got a responsibility to discharge. And that responsibility is to pass on a message. And there's something that this girl has that completely outweighs what Naaman has, because she has a knowledge. If we take it into our language - she has a knowledge of

the Lord Jesus as our saviour. She has an incredible faith in God, a faith that actually goes beyond reason or logic.

She says that this man is going to be cured of his leprosy. It never happened before, and yet she has this unshakable faith in our saviour. And can I tell you tonight that I have an unshakable faith in my saviour, that He can save you tonight as He saved me? And I know that this Hall is made up of a majority, maybe all, who share that same unshakable faith.

We're talking in the reading about mockers and mocking, but there's one thing that a mocker cannot do is take away what someone with unshakable faith has. And I trust that by the end of tonight we can all be absolutely assured in our own mind that we belong to those who have this unshakable faith.

Who would you rather be, a great man, a great man in this world with nothing but the grave before you or a great woman, or a worthless as far as this world, expendable young girl or boy? It doesn't matter about the age. Who doesn't have anything in this world but who is bound for glory? Because those are the two characters that we have first of all that we've read of.

It's been said by someone that the definition of a winner in this world is the person who dies with the most toys. And by that definition Naaman was a winner, he had everything, and he was on the verge of losing everything, losing a lot. But then we have the intervention of the gospel.

And it's a wonderful fact even in this disinterested country that's turned its back on God, that as we look across the whole world tonight the gospel has made its intervention in men's and women's lives and their souls, and altered their path from a path to destruction to a path to life.

Naaman knew he was in trouble. If you're here tonight and you're still in your sins, you are in trouble and it's good that you know it. But there's a consequence to the gospel, there's a consequence determining aside from it, not answering to it.

Colonel Ellis many years ago, I couldn't just pinpoint exactly when but it was when a pound was worth far more than it is now. On his deathbed, he was a well-known atheist, on his deathbed cried, "I will give 30,000 pounds to the man who convinces me to my satisfaction that there is no such place as hell." Today there will be many places and many people and many institutions that will happily trouser the 30,000 pounds of whatever money you offer to pass on that lie.

I remember many years ago, some of you will remember, Alec Campbell, who was local in Findochty and we had a barber in Bucky who was a lay preacher in one of the churches, and he used to sort of practice his sermons on the people he was cutting the hair for. I know because I sat under some of his sermons.

But this day he had his brother Alec cutting his hair, and he told him, he said, "You know what I'm going to speak about this Sunday?" And he said no. He says, "I'm going to preach on hell." And Alec says, "I know what you're going to say about it." And he says what. He says, "You're going to say it doesn't exist." And he says, "That's right." That was a man who was going to stand in a position like this and pass on the message that there was no consequence, no consequence for failing to accept the gospel. He will be held responsible for that.

But I want to discharge my responsibility tonight, it's not that the gospel's a gloomy story, it's a great story, it's a story about God's love. But right at the very beginning we have a crisis; we have a man who's facing a lost eternity. That's the effect of it.

But this girl, she steps up and she passes on the message. What is the message? In her simple faith she says that there's a prophet, but we can change that to there's a saviour, the Lord Jesus, who will cure him of his leprosy. How desperate this man must have been to grasp at the, as I said earlier on, the lowest currency in the land, the comment of a slave girl from a foreign country? And yet he recognizes that he is now in trouble.

I wonder how many people in Worthing tonight are lost and don't even know it? How sobering that is? How sobering it is? We know that there is a need and it should give us an impetus, a motivation to meet that need.

And she passes on the message and Naaman goes and he makes a blunder, it's a common blunder, he goes to the wrong address. I have to apologize for always telling stories from my work, but I retire early next year God willing, so I'm running out of track, I'm running out of stories, but my line of work you knock on lots of doors and not every door wants to open for you. And I know that there's been times when I've been present when you've got a warrant and a squad of people with you and with a clearly big dramatic kind of entry, you knock down the door and you gain entry.

And I was speaking to a colleague of mine who was in one of these warrants in Aberdeen, a couple of years ago, and they smashed the door down of this house and got in to find this poor old lady sitting, cowering beside a fire. They'd gone to the wrong door; they'd gone to the wrong house.

When you go to the wrong door in this world it's embarrassing, and there was a cost attached to that, there was an apology. The chief had to attend and there was money involved and there was cost. But when it comes to the gospel, if you go to the wrong door and there are many, many doors that you can go to, the consequence could be fatal for your soul for eternity.

There are those that go to the door of their own ability to save themselves by their own work, or go to a religion that places faith in something that is quite apart from God. And that's probably the natural step that men take when they realize that they've got a need. But it was important to go to the right door.

Can I tell you who the right door is? The Lord Jesus Himself said, "I am the door." It's the only door, the only, as I said earlier, the only name given under heaven. And so Naaman is redirected.

If you are chopping at the wrong door tonight can I say tonight as the preacher, can I redirect you, can I re-signpost you? It's a great partnership terminology that, signposting people to different things. Well, signposting the sinner to the solution to his issue is to point out the Lord Jesus, point out the one who hung on Calvary's cross. We were occupied with Him this afternoon as the one who rose again, that is the person.

So what happens? Naaman gets as far as the prophet. Well, the prophet really represents the Lord Jesus, and this is when we find out that there's a second problem with Naaman. We knew about the leprosy, we can see it, it's outward, it's on display, it's ugly, it's horrible, it's creeping all over his body. I suppose that would speak of the outward condition of our sins and what we have done in our lives to give us the title of being a sinner. But then we find out that he is suffering from pride as

well, he's suffering from pride, because, you see, he's gone to the right door but he's not happy with the answer, he's not happy with the gospel.

And I'm just going to digress for a moment here and say that this story here gives us just a touch of what I would call dispensational truth. And it's easy to roll the eyes and to just sort of think that's a term that would probably be left out the gospel, but if you could just bear with me for a moment.

When the Lord Jesus was here and He came across the leper, He could speak to the leper, He could touch the leper, the leper could see Him. One of the lepers returned to Him and praised Him. The Lord is not here today, the Lord is in heaven. And here if you want to take it into our language and as I say transpose this story for the gospel, Elisha was dealing with a Gentile, that's just like you and like me, like he doesn't come to the door to physically deal with Elisha, he sends his servant. And I think it tells us something about the work of the Holy Spirit - going on, seeking out souls, working with souls to bring them to a knowledge of Christ.

I just say that because that's how the Lord deals with us, and I think that's why in this story here the prophet deals with the Gentile maybe in a slightly different way from how he would have dealt with a Jew.

But in any case Naaman is offended, and maybe you are, maybe you're offended by the gospel tonight because the message that came to him was that he had to plunge in the Jordan, go and wash seven times in the Jordan. And that wasn't what he was expecting at all. And maybe that's not what you're expecting. He had his own ideas. And that's what man tends to have; he has his own ideas as to how God might want to do his business.

He said before they thought he will certainly come out to me and stand and call on the name of Jehovah and wave his hand over the place. He was looking for a bit of a performance.

And there's some doors that you'll chap on that will give you a performance, make something of you. You see, he was a proud man. He's got nothing to be proud of as far as his natural condition went, but he wanted to be made something off. He'd all this clothing he brought, showing his wealth. He was happy to pay money - that's another door that people chap on, they think that they can maybe give away their possessions and somehow achieve satisfaction with God.

And then he had these other thoughts, Abanah and the Pharpar and the rivers of Damascus, but that's not what was presented here. He was going to have to plunge - what does that mean? He was going to have to go and wash in the Jordan seven times. How would he manage to do that? It means to go down, and to go down into the waters of the Jordan. It speaks of death really, it speaks of death, it puts man out of sight.

Repentance involves that you and I put ourselves out of sight. It's not just a case of saying I'm sorry. Of course, we should be sorry that we're sinners. It's putting man entirely out of sight and taking God's sight as it were in the matter. There's two things that we are told to do in the scripture, one is to repent and the other one is to believe. To repent is to go down and to put ourselves out of sight. To believe is to look up and put our faith and trust in the one who's risen.

Well, Naaman had something going for him and so do you, he had good friends, he had people who were concerned for him, not just the preacher, not just the maid. But I don't think there'll be anyone in this room, I'll tell you for a fact - there's no one in this room who doesn't have others in this room, perhaps everyone in this room who doesn't care for them and care for their soul.

It's one of the unique things about Christianity is that there's no one who's a believer who wants to see anyone walk out the door towards a lost eternity. It's a wonderful thing. We spoke at it on today about being caught up together, well, I think that this is something that believers find themselves together in. And they speak to Naaman, they reasoned with him. You think of the language of God, come let us reason together.

Why would God bother with man? That's what the Psalmist said. What is man that is worth mindful of him? And yet, God loves us so much. He's created us, He has a right to us as a creator, and He has a right to us through the redemption, the redemptive work of Christ.

So Naaman is spoken to, maybe someone spoken to you, maybe you've spoken to another friend, maybe you've put it off, procrastination. Someone said that procrastination is hell's recruiting officer. "Put it off, put it off." But there comes a point in desperation where this man puts his faith in the message that's been given.

How we need to put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus? You think of him hanging in that cross. What did He say? Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. That's not what I would have said. But that's what He said. The outlook of God towards man is forgiveness. He shed His precious blood. That blood had to be shed in order that I could stand here tonight.

This is ... a lot of preparation has gone into this weekend, a lot of work, food and arrangements and accommodation and so forth. But the preparations that have gone into tonight have involved the death of the Lord Jesus. So Naaman takes the plunge. I wonder if everyone here has.

I wonder if everyone here has gone and washed in the Jordan. Well, we don't have to go to the Jordan and wash. I'd never been to Israel. I understand it's not a great river, nothing particularly special about it. No. But we washed in the blood, washed in the blood of Jesus.

And he goes down seven times according to the saying of the man of God, not according to some sort of deviation from the Word of God, not according to some theory that somebody's come up with which maybe sounds quite nice but doesn't match to God's Word. No, he comes to the point and so much do you and so have I when we have to accept that the gospel is going out for all of us, and we have to come to Jesus.

And what does it say? His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. I told you this was a good story; it's got a greater end, doesn't it? Naaman skin is cleaned, the leprosy is gone. He dealt with the pride, I suppose that's repentance.

How is our skin before God? A lot of money is spent in this country, in the world today to try to keep skin healthy and to try to somehow reverse the aging process and so on, but the cost as I've said already in order that you and I can leave this room clean, can leave this world clean - it costs the saviour His life.

What does that mean to you? What does it mean to you that somebody had to die for you, somebody who loves you, somebody who has demonstrated the Love of God? What a consequence for those who pass by and do not respond to this message? I said it before, but this country's totally divided, isn't it? From the Shetlands right down to the Scilly Isles, completely divided. Cities are divided, towns, streets, families, leavers and remainers.

I wonder what you are. When the Lord Jesus returns, are you going to leave with Him to be with Him in glory or are you going to remain here for judgment?

There's a lot of people who are not ... I know what you thought I was speaking about; there's a lot of people who would say, "We're not very interested in that." There's a lot of people not interested in the gospel. But irrespective of people's interests, they belong to one of those camps.

We spoke this afternoon, we read in Thessalonians of a great time that's coming when the Lord Jesus Himself is going to come with an assembling shout, and I hope and I trust that everyone here is waiting for that shout and is going to belong to that great company of people who'll be caught up. This is a reality; it's not a fairy story.

I remember our stories when I was young, ladybug books with once upon a time, and they always finish with they lived happily ever after. And you knew it was a fairy story. I can tell you the only happily ever after is for the person who puts their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's not a story made up by man, that's the gospel truth.

Well, Naaman found it, he didn't get there easily, it was a circuitous route but he got there. I trust there's no one here putting it off, hanging out with further own thoughts or rejecting the message. I trust that we put our faith and trust in Him. For those of us have already done so, that we get a fresh sense tonight of what it is to belong to the Lord Jesus, looking forward to His return and get God's blessing.