



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Pentecost 4**  
**Proper 9 (C)**  
**July 3, 2022**

**[RCL] 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; Galatians 6:(1-6)7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

*Editor's Note: You will note that today's author uses a convention common in some traditions for avoiding fully writing out the name, or in this case, a common substitute for the name, of the Lord. Generally, this spelling is used by writers who do not wish to risk the name being destroyed or defaced. It can be read as you normally might.*

### **2 Kings 5:1-14**

Our story opens with the introduction of Naaman, a great and powerful general. However, despite this warrior's military prowess, it could not prevent him from contracting leprosy. Naaman's wife had in her care an Israelite slave girl who believed that a prophet from Israel could save his life. Naaman believed the slave girl, and with his king's approval and lavish gifts, Naaman made his way to the king of Israel. Upon hearing Naaman's request, the king is distressed, because he does not believe that Naaman can be healed. Elisha rebukes the king of Israel for his unbelief and has Naaman come to his house so that "he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." Elisha does not greet Naaman. Instead, he sends a messenger to instruct Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman is now angered; he is sick, tired, and offended. Yet again, a servant speaks up and, heeding his servant's advice to do as Elisha had said, Naaman is cured of his leprosy. Naaman survives because he is willing to be humble enough to listen. Naaman listens, not just to kings and rulers, but also to a girl who was enslaved, an uncouth prophet, and his servants. Naaman listens to those believed to be lowly. G-d reveals those lowly persons' inherent value by using them to dispense divine wisdom, speak the truth, and help save a life.

- Have you ever received advice or wisdom from an unlikely source?
- Have you ever felt like you were an unlikely source of wisdom?

### **Psalm 30**

Psalm 30 is a song of praise and thanksgiving for G-d's covenantal faithfulness. The psalmist does not make an empty claim; instead, they give testimony to how G-d has provided for them. This testimony undergirds the psalmist's implicit argument that G-d is for them; specifically, G-d is for G-d's people. Furthermore, the movement of the psalm reveals the bold theological statement about G-d's faithfulness is steadfast both in times of trial and in times of joy. Walter Brueggemann calls Psalm 30 a psalm of reorientation. He explains, "The song is not about the natural outcome of trouble, but about the decisive

transformation made possible by this [G-d] who causes new life where none seems possible.” (The Message of the Psalms. Walter Brueggemann. Pg. 125) The natural outcome of being pursued by one’s enemies is to be overtaken. The natural outcome of going down into the grave is death. The natural outcome of being out of favor with G-d is divine rejection. But G-d is not like other gods. G-d hears the cries of G-d’s people. G-d intervenes on their behalf, turns to them in times of trial, and transforms their wailing into dancing.

- Can you describe a time that G-d has reoriented your reality?
- I wonder: What does it feel like to believe all is lost and then experience salvation through divine intervention?

### **Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16**

Like many people who grew up in the church in America, I grew up in an environment that imposes our socio-political context on the Scriptures. Paul’s letter to the Galatians was not immune from being funneled through a myopic, individualist lens. The first half was misinterpreted to mean that each person should “do their own work” or “pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” However, Paul’s intentions were quite the opposite. Paul is motivated by the desire to see communal unity. At the beginning of the letter, we remember that Paul is writing to people struggling to accept non-circumcised Jews as faithful followers of “The Way.” This is where the Galatians are reminded that the law is a trusted way to encourage and correct, but the law neither negates nor supersedes the movement of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the law is not an end in itself. The law, coupled with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, is a means to bear the fruits of the Spirit, which Paul outlines in the previous chapter. Therefore, the work that Paul is referring to is those transformational practices that allow the community to be bound together in unity – to be the hands and feet of Christ. Some may do this by following the law, and some may not, but their “work” should produce a cruciform life of self-giving love for one another, their community, and the world.

- How do you cultivate love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?
- Can you recall a time when you were corrected with gentleness? How did you work through that correction?

### **Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

In this text, Jesus sends the seventy disciples out into the world to, as we might say, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” While the Gospel of Luke recounts Jesus as giving more in-depth instructions than what is articulated in the dismissal that is vibrantly uttered by our deacons after the Sunday morning worship service, the overall sentiment is there. These numerous instructions regarding how long one should stay in a town or home and the many disciples being sent out are connected to the urgency of the proclaimed message, which is the news that the Kingdom of G-d has come near. The disciples should not waste time, but be urgent in sharing the Good News, and so should we. The good news of the kingdom of G-d coming near is that the broken will find wholeness, the lonely will be restored to the community, the

captive will be set free, and all wrongs will be righted. The disciples return home overjoyed because the good news of G-d's reign did not return void. It can be challenging for our 21st-century brains; the language of demons and Satan can trip us up. However, the point is that whoever or whatever, whether it be persons, beings, systems, or structures, is antithetical to the Gospel cannot withstand the reign of G-d.

- Does this story in the Gospel of Luke reframe how you understand the sending at the end of the service?
- What does it mean for you to be sent out into the world in peace to love and serve the Lord?

*This Bible study was written by **Brittany Sparrow Savage**. Growing up, I was raised in the Church of the Nazarene. This denomination, being very mission-minded, introduced me to the love of G-d and the ways in which the Spirit moves. Sensing a call to ministry, I decided to attend Trevecca Nazarene University and majored in religion with a minor in pastoral ministries. After graduation, I married the fabulous Cameron, and we moved to Kansas City so that I could attend seminary at Nazarene Theological Seminary. During my time in seminary, I discovered the Anglican tradition. I fell in love with the ancient liturgies, their love for social justice, and above all the formation through prayer. I graduated from seminary in May of 2021, and I am finishing my Anglican Year at the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry. Many thanks are given to St. Augustine's Episcopal Church for their mentorship and love. This blessed community has helped me find my church home and a place to rightly discern G-d's call on my life.*