

“Trust is Everything”

Based on 2 Kings 5:1-15 and Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

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The stories we heard read this morning are fairly familiar. The first one is about Naaman who was a mighty general, well known of his military victories. Victories that God was given credit to help him achieve in fact. He served the army of Aram, which is currently called Syria. Even though he was well known and well respected, he had a vulnerability. He endured an embarrassing skin disease. Whatever he had tried to get it cured didn't work. No ointments or salves could clear up the rash. But the slave girl who worked for his wife told her that there was a healer in Israel who could cure her husband of his leprosy. She tells him about it and then he goes to tell his king, who sends him off with a letter to explain to the king of Israel that Naaman is worthy of being cured of his leprosy. But the king of Israel interprets the king of Syria's letter as suggesting *he* is to heal Naaman. He cries out in dismay over this impossible request. Elisha hears about it and sends word to the king to send Naaman to him. He'll take care of it. So Naaman, with all this treasure and ten sets of clothes for some reason, makes his way to Elisha for what he anticipates will be a very public and sensational healing experience. But without accepting payment or even greeting him, Elisha sends an aide to the famous general with a message to go wash in the Jordan. How humiliating! But as the general stomps off two of his servants talk some sense in to him. So he goes to the river and washes himself and is cleansed of his leprosy.

The second story is the one where Jesus sends out an advance team of seventy or seventy-two people, depending on which ancient manuscript you go with. They are to go out in teams of two to all the towns and places Jesus intends to visit. Their job is to get to the community, cure people, and announce that the kingdom of God is near. He gives them specific directions about what not to take and what not to do in the country when they are walking to the towns, specifically, to travel light and don't talk to anyone. They are on an urgent mission and

there is no time to waste. He tells them what to do when they get to their assigned town. They are to come to a random house and knock on the door. When the door opens they are to greet the person with a word of peace. If peace is returned to them then they are to go on in and receive whatever hospitality is offered them. No bouncing from house to house. After enjoying the hospitality of their hosts they are to then work the community curing people and proclaiming the coming reign of God. And if no one wants them, then they are to shake the dust off their sandals, proclaim the coming reign anyway, with a warning that this town will be wiped out by God, and then move on. The apostles go off and do what Jesus tells them. Everything works out great and they return filled with joy to tell Jesus all the wonderful things they were able to do, how they were able to defeat the power of evil. And Jesus tells them it's fine to celebrate that but they should mostly be excited that their names are written in the book of life.

There is a lot that we could look at in these two stories. For the healing of Naaman we could look at the power dynamics. The general and the two kings seem to be full of themselves, a bit out of touch and reactive. But the young Jewish slave girl and the two servants of the general are voices of reason. The power relations are all turned upside down. Or with the story of Jesus sending out the seventy we could reflect on how the apostles were just the messengers, and not to take all the credit when things turn out great and don't take it personally if things go wrong. People aren't rejecting them, they are rejecting the one who sent them. They are just the messengers.

But as I reflected on these two stories one thing that struck me is how the issue of trust is woven throughout both stories. Trust is the grease that makes these stories move. If there had been a lack of trust then nothing would have happened. Naaman wouldn't have made his way to Israel and the disciples would not have allowed themselves to be sent out as sheep among a pack of wolves. If you think about it, trust is a necessary ingredient in all of our lives. Without trust, none of us would probably be able to make it out of the house every morning. Trust, having faith that things will work, that people will do their jobs, that your car will start and the grocery store will be open, this is what makes

life flow. Without a basic trust, life becomes incredibly difficult to deal with. And if you have lost trust in humanity...that's a tough spot to be in.

Let's look at how trust is present in these stories. First, the story of the healing of Naaman. The Jewish slave girl tells the wife of Naaman that there is a prophet who can heal her husband. Amazingly, Naaman's wife trusts the girl enough to tell her husband that he should give it a try. And he trusts her enough to follow through. I see trust showing up again when Elisha tells Naaman what to do to get healed. Elisha trusts that God will make the healing happen. We also see how Naaman trusts his servants when they reason with him to do the easy thing of dipping himself seven times into the river. In this story, the Jewish slave girl, the wife of Naaman and the two servants were trusted. And God was trusted by Elisha.

In the story of the sending of the seventy, there is a lot of trust. Jesus is sending them out like sheep among a pack of wolves. That definitely takes a great deal of trust. But not only that. They were to travel without a bag, without any extra stuff. And they had to trust that the community in which they entered would offer them hospitality. They had to trust the family they lived with. At least they weren't travelling alone. They were in pairs and surely they had each other's backs. They could trust each other. And they had to trust that the authority Jesus had given them to cure the sick would work. That would be embarrassing if they tried to heal people and failed. So all through this story we see trust at work.

In fact, without trust, nothing would have happened. If Naaman's wife had not trusted her slave she would never have told Naaman to go to Israel. And if Naaman had not trusted his wife he wouldn't have gone. If Elisha had not trusted God then he would have never made the bold move of having Naaman come to his house. And if Naaman had not trusted his servants he would have not gone into the Jordan river. If the disciples had not trusted Jesus they would have never gone out. Jesus probably would have never sent them if he didn't already know they had trust in him. If they were not willing to trust the hospitality of others the disciples would not have put themselves in the vulnerable position Jesus

put them in. If they had not trusted the authority Jesus had given them they would never have attempted to heal anyone. So trust is the necessary ingredient for everything to happen. The healing of Naaman, the sending of the disciples and the faithful work they accomplished all required trust.

When I first came among you, one of the first things that I needed to do as your pastor was to build trust. Whether we would decide to move ahead with becoming a second location of King Avenue or decide another path, I knew that if I was going to be able to lead you through the process you all would need to have some trust in me. And trust has to be earned. It is built up over time. Trust is developed by being consistent, by doing what you say you will do, by being faithful. Trust is developed by being vulnerable, by sharing, by nurturing relationships. Trust is established by doing life together.

This is part of what is going on in the story of the seventy apostles. Jesus told them that when each pair got to their assigned town they are to go to any random house, knock, greet the person who opens the door and, if welcomed, to come inside and break bread together. They are to be gracious guests, receiving whatever hospitality is offered them. It was only after they have been welcomed and have settled in, have built some relationships, have developed some trust, that they are to then cure the sick and proclaim the coming of the reign of God. The ministry activity occurs after trust has been established.

When Pastor Steven comes among you in a few weeks, building trust should be at the top of everyone's list. You see, it goes both ways. It will take time for you to come to trust Pastor Steven. But it will also take time for Pastor Steven to trust you. I think this will be especially important for St. Luke's going forward. There continues to be great potential here. We are situated in a dynamic community. And we live in a time when risk taking is going to be necessary, to try new things, build new partnerships, seize opportunities. For the risk taking required for ministry in our society, trust is absolutely critical. So you all are going to have to get to a place where you can trust Pastor Steven. And likewise Pastor Steven is going to have to get to a place where he can trust you.

My encouragement for you is to do your part to initiate a relationship with Pastor Steven. Don't wait for him to call on you. Reach out to him and invite him for coffee or for dinner. Share with him your hopes and dreams. Get to know each other. Share your stories. Make yourself vulnerable. But most importantly, trust God to continue to lead this church into the future. For St. Luke's to be faithful and to thrive in the years to come, what will be required is trust: trust in your pastor, trust in each other, and especially trust in God. If you all can develop and maintain trust, then there is no telling what God will be able to accomplish through you.