

## Into A Far Country

Year C

Season of Pentecost

Sunday Between July 3 to July 9 Inclusive

July 4, 2010, Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Read the Bible passage: [2 Kings 5:1-14](#), The Message; or [2 Kings 5:1-14](#), The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Read the Bible passage: [Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#), The Message; or [Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#), The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Faith-provoking, historical insights into the lesson by [David Ewart](#), [Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#).

Click here: [George Hermanson's sermon](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this sermon.

After church we are leaving for a brief trip to visit friends. Suzanne has done her usual due diligence of preparation. Got the Google maps. We figure out what we will need by checking the weather forecasts. Lay out our things. Wonder if we are taking too much or not enough. Worry. Seek for just right information as we go into a far country.

Planning is big on our agenda -for we want to make the best use of our time and we want to arrive without too many distractions. There is an irony to all of this because we live a time a great prosperity, yet with great dissatisfaction. We have genuine shortage of time, and deep shortage of deep spirituality. There is a deficit in meaning and both rich and poor are afflicted by this deficit. To fill the emptiness many turn to consumption which in turn commodifies us. Rather than growing free time for compassion, we are even more closed in - worried, scared. Prosperity has exacted a terrible price from its favourites.

Many have used this discontentment to manufacture satisfaction. Charlatan gurus and televangelists use this appetite for spirituality to offer trivial experience. There is a fundamental need in humanity for meaning, and deep experience, and if that is not met then we seek it in all the wrong places.

In business, and life, there are those who are called life coaches. They sit down with us and lay out what is necessary to build a life or a business. It is a expanding business.

The United Church had a big conference on June 20 weekend. Over 500 people gathered in some 100 plus groups. Most had to come to be inspired and to find ways to be a better church. So there is a desire to find our way into the future. So Churches seek out what will help them grow, as if there is a technique that provides a simple solution, a silver bullet to what ails us.

Our texts speak about a time of dislocation and switching loyalties. When we see the texts in that context, we are able to mine meaning for our times of dislocation and switching loyalties. Kings speaks about how to live

in a far country. They are about healing, acceptance, hospitality and the common good. The vision of God preached in them restores the community's well-being and overcomes those attitudes, practices and programs that drive a wedge between people.

Bruce Epperly has this to say: "The healing of Naaman asserts that healing can occur anywhere, by any practice, through any mediator, and at any pace."

Naaman finds a path to healing from an unexpected source, a Hebraic slave girl, who testifies to the power of her God. Naaman encounters an unexpected healer, Elisha, a Hebrew, who points the general to an unexpected action, a dip in nearby and rather undistinguished Jordan River.

Naaman is initially angry at the prophet for suggesting such a simple healing. But, once again, the general receives counsel from an unexpected source, his servants.

Surely, this healing encounter is a challenge to all who see healing as primarily dramatic in nature. God seeks healing in every circumstance and virtually any encounter can be a source of personal transformation, embracing body, mind, spirit, and relationships. God's aim at healing is both intimate and universal.

When we say "yes" to Christ's question, "do you want to be healed?" a lively and expanding world of healing possibilities opens up for us. Most of these are, like the Jordan River, right in front of us.

This deep seeking is a trust in a God who is experienced in human relationships. Such seeking awakens us to new life and possibility for transformation. Opening ourselves to God through protest and pain as well as petition and praise enables God to be more directly present in our lives as we move from "disorientation" to "new orientation." (Brueggemann)

Luke's gospel portrays Jesus' followers going out into the world with no safety net. They are sent out into a far country without backup plans. What they do have are the symbols of holy hospitality. It is not about food handed out at the door. It is a recognition of the truth of we get by relying on the kindness of strangers. (Blanche Dubois in a street car called desire.)

In our texts we get a wider sense of a world community - no us against them -we are all moving to a far country where those things that divide are broken down. Inclusion and restoration of the stranger, the enemy general into the protective custody of God, these are the values that matter. The alien belongs to God.

The public space is also personal space. in a shared reality. The symbolic and actual eating together evokes an attitude of hospitality. "Whenever you enter a house, eat the food offered." This is an act that heals - redefines hospitality. The old idea was one could only eat proper and sacred food. Now what counts is openness to the otherness of reality. The companions of Jesus are sent out into a far country with only one attitude - inclusion.

This is the attitude of seeking well-being for others and that seeking heals not only the other but oneself.

# George Hermanson

May the Lure be with you

We feel this truth intuitively when we speak of giving good vibes or praying for others who are different and often at a distance. We know that envy and hatred beget broken relationships; we have felt that even in our families. We know what heals is care of the other, and that care also heals us.

George Hermanson

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