

A reading from the Second Book of the Kings

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes?

Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the

name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

The Word of the Lord.

Today's Psalm is Psalm 30. We will read it responsively, breaking at the asterisk. It can be found on page 621 in the BCP, or on the screens behind me.

1 I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have lifted me up *

and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

2 O Lord my God, I cried out to you, *

and you restored me to health.

3 You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; *

you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.

4 Sing to the Lord, you servants of his; *

give thanks for the remembrance of his holiness.

5 For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye, *

his favor for a lifetime.

6 Weeping may spend the night, *

but joy comes in the morning.

7 While I felt secure, I said, "I shall never be disturbed. *

You, Lord, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains."

8 Then you hid your face, *

and I was filled with fear.

9 I cried to you, O Lord; *

I pleaded with the Lord, saying,

10 "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit? *

will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?

11 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; *

O Lord, be my helper."

12 You have turned my wailing into dancing; *

you have put off my sack-cloth and clothed me with joy.

13 Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; *

O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Galatians

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised--only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they

may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Word of the Lord.