

28th Sunday of the Year – October 13, 2019

2 Kings 5: 14-17 2 Timothy 2: 8-13 Luke 17: 13-19

It often occurs to me that the richness of God speaking to us in the Scriptures becomes more evident when reading through a passage which has often been read before. For some reason, a particular word or phrase or sentence happens to stand out. Such was the case this week in Paul's letter to his friend and disciple Timothy that was just read, in the comment made by Paul: "The word of God is not chained."

What made this statement notable, I believe, was giving thought to Paul's situation at the time that I mentioned last week. Paul himself was chained. He was restricted in some way as he awaited trial. While he was limited, he proclaimed that God's communication with us was not..



As a way for all of us to understand this more effectively, we also heard part of the story of Naaman the Syrian and about a Samaritan, a foreigner, who were both restored from the restraints of leprosy. As a disease itself, leprosy can be horrible to see. Those afflicted by it were often ostracized from society. The disease disfigures and corrupts the physical appearance of the individual. It offers a clear representation of how the selfishness of sin corrupts a person.

It is particularly significant in these accounts that both of these individuals are foreigners. They do not have the benefit, in their background, of the covenant God has

established with the Chosen People. Both of them suffered from the physical corruption of leprosy. Both, however, responded to the unchained word of God that was addressed to them. Both showed evident reaction to the love of God that touched  them. In the case of Naaman, he declared: "I will not sacrifice to any other god than the Lord." In the case of the one who returned to Jesus, he was one of ten who had been restored to health and well-being. He was the only one who returned to express gratitude ye, as Jesus notes "no one but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God. The word of God is not restricted but, in these cases, reached out to the "foreign" persons who responded to God's loving communication.

What is asked of each one of us, what is sought from each one of us is evident. In the midst of our daily live the communication of our loving God is made to us. It is found in the faith that we declare It is found in the opportunities presented daily to live that faith. It is a faith, a belief, that is not just words. It is faith that is to be a commitment that affects all aspects of our living. It is a faith that is to be guided by the awareness that "if we die with him, we will live with him. We join even the difficult parts of living with Christ in order to share in his resurrection to new life. "If we persevere, we will reign. Nothing can defeat or overcome us if we are united with Christ. Even if we fail, even if we are unfaithful to this union with Christ, God, through Christ, continues to be faithful to us.

This is, in my understanding, the message of God that is communicated to us today. God's love restores even the most repulsive and disfiguring of any one of us. God's love is not chained. It is not restricted. God's love reaches out to the estranged, to the foreigner in us. It is for us to reply with conviction and gratitude, declaring in all aspects of our

lives and living, our faith and trust in a truly good and gracious God.