

A reading from the second book of Kings.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Naaman the Syrian 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.

Naaman = NAY-muhn

Elisha = e-LIE-shuh

Then he returned to the man of God,  
he and all his company;

Naaman came and stood before Elisha and said,  
“Now I know that there is no God in all the earth  
except in Israel;

please accept a present from your servant.”

But Elisha said,

“As the Lord lives, whom I serve,  
I will accept nothing!”

Naaman urged him to accept,  
but he refused.

Then Naaman said,

“If not, please let two mule-loads of earth

be given to your servant;

for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice  
to any god except the Lord.”

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

Remember Jesus Christ,  
raised from the dead, a descendant of David –  
that is my Gospel,  
for which I suffer hardship,  
even to the point of being chained like a criminal.

But the word of God is not chained.

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect,  
so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus,  
with eternal glory.

The saying is sure:

If we have died with him,  
we will also live with him;  
if we endure,  
we will also reign with him;  
if we deny him,  
he will also deny us;  
if we are faithless,  
he remains faithful –  
for he cannot deny himself.

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C 28

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

On the way to Jerusalem  
Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.  
As he entered a village,  
ten lepers approached him.  
Keeping their distance,  
they called out, saying,  
“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”  
When he saw them, he said to them,  
“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”  
And as they went, they were made clean.  
Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed,  
turned back, praising God with a loud voice.  
He fell at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.  
And he was a Samaritan.  
Then Jesus asked,  
“Were not ten made clean?  
But the other nine, where are they?  
Was none of them found to return  
and give praise to God except this foreigner?”  
Then Jesus said to the Samaritan,  
“Get up and go on your way;  
your faith has made you well.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: 2 Kings 5:14-17

The most significant feature in the story about Naaman the Syrian occurs prior to our pericope. Naaman expected a spectacular cure and was annoyed when Elisha told him to go and wash in the Jordan—that puny little ditch, when there were far greater rivers back home! Reluctantly, Naaman was persuaded to try it.

Jordan stands for the “scandal of particularity.” There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. The gate is narrow, and the way is hard, that leads to life. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

In antiquity, leprosy was regarded as the worst of diseases, and its cure an impossibility. Thus, the story became a parable of human beings’ plight, from which they would only be delivered by the Messiah, that is, by a miracle at the end of time.

Another aspect of this story, which is taken up by the New Testament in Jesus’ sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30), is the fact that Naaman was a Syrian and therefore excluded from the community of Israel. Thus, his healing foreshadows the universality of messianic salvation.

Rejected by Israel, that salvation would be opened up to the Gentiles: “There were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian” (Lk 4:27).

This theme of universality is also picked up in the gospel of the day, in which the nine lepers from the chosen people did not return to give thanks, but only the tenth, and he was a Samaritan.

### Responsorial Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

Psalm 98 is from a collection of magnificent enthronement psalms (Ps 93, Pss 96-100). They are full of exuberant joy at the saving power of yhwh, visibly expressed (according to scholarly theory) in the enthronement of the king at the new-year festival.

The refrain underlines the fact that the “nations” see God’s saving power. If, as some think, the psalm originally celebrated Israel’s return from exile in Babylon—it is certainly imbued with the theology of Second Isaiah, as the words “saving power,” “victory,” and “vindication” show the nations are passive witnesses rather than active participants in the divine salvation.

As spectators, they watch Israel return from exile and see in it an act of YHWH’s self-vindication. But in the Christian liturgical community, for which the saving power of God is manifested in the Christ-event, this must be reinterpreted to mean that the nations actually participate in the salvation.

## Reading II: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Even if the modern critical view of the Pastorals as deuter-Pauline is correct, the first paragraph of this reading may well be part of Paul's genuine farewell letter to Timothy, onto which the passages directed against Gnosticism and toward setting up a Church order were grafted by the deuter-Pauline author.

In any case, this passage fittingly reflects Paul's situation in prison at Rome just before his martyrdom. There is a poignant contrast between the Apostle's own condition—wearing fetters like a criminal—and his confident assertion that the word of God is not bound. (I heard this as a sermon text more than once in Germany during the Church struggle, when Pastor Niemöller and others were imprisoned by the Gestapo.)

Paul is also confident that his suffering will contribute to the forward movement of salvation history: "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation . . . ." This notion is fairly common in the Pauline writings (see the catalogues of Paul's sufferings in 2 Cor and also Col 1:24).

## Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

We have already suggested how this reading may be linked with the first reading, and how cleansing from leprosy is a type of the messianic salvation. Also, we have called attention to another link between this gospel and the Old Testament reading—the universality of messianic salvation. But there is another theme in the gospel that could be developed, and that is the theme of gratitude. It is striking that all ten lepers were healed. The grateful one got no more than the others did, except the assurance from the Lord, "Your faith has made you well." Nor did the other lepers lose what they had. There was no punitive miracle returning them to their leprous state.

There is much to meditate upon here. The gifts of God are without repentance; gratitude has no ulterior motivation, for example to secure further blessings. Ingratitude is perhaps the most common of all human failings, as Shakespeare observed: "Blow, blow thou winter cold; thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude."

Reginald H. Fuller