

Today's reading comes from

2 Kings 5:1-14 New Revised Standard Version

The Healing of Naaman

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.^[a] **2** 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. **3** She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'^[b] **4** So Naaman^[c] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. **5** 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. **6** 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.'^[d] **7** 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?'^[e] Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.'

8 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.'⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. **10** 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.'¹¹ 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!'^[f] **12** Are not Abana^[g] 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. **13** 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"?' **14** 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.

Sermon: **“It’s Normal to be Angry When Things Don’t Go as We Expected”**

by Pastor Chris Eng

Text: 2 Kings 5: 1 - 14, N.R.S.V.

Sunday, July 3, 2022 @ 10:00 a.m.

Kailua Christian Church UCC

Introduction. The Sunday closest to the 4th of July celebrates Independence Day with the focus on Old Glory in the sanctuary or hot dogs and ice cream after the worship. I’m taking liberty by focusing on the emotion of anger that some of us need to be liberated from. Growing up, I did not know what to do when I got angry. In the Biblical text, we observe how the King of Israel gets so angry when asked to do something he cannot do (heal Naaman), he tears his clothes. Naaman, the Army commander of the King of Aram, reacts in anger when the prophet Elisha sends a messenger who tells him to “Go wash in the Jordan seven times” in order to be healed from Hansen’s disease. These are just two examples of anger we may be able to relate to when we are unable to do something or when we’re asked to do something that we don’t feel like doing (maybe because it’s not who we are). Let’s invite God’s Spirit to open our minds and our hearts to the message today that focuses on the emotion of anger.

- 1. It’s natural to be angry when we’re asked to do something we cannot do.** There could be many reasons why we’re not able to help someone or perform some needed task. The king of Israel could not cure Naaman. If we cannot perform or live up to certain expectations of us, it is natural to become angry. In this story, the king asks, “Am I God, to give death or life that this man sends word to me to cure a man...?” Sometimes we may be compared with someone else. Perhaps someone at work or at home asks us to do something which we’re unable to do and adds, “Why couldn’t you be like so and so?” When I was called to serve Nuuanu Congregational Church in 1981, I remember some of the youth asking me, “Why couldn’t you be more like Grant?” (the late Rev. Grant Lee was the associate minister before me). This made me angry and then I even cried. I just wanted to be accepted for me. And yet, these feelings of mine were normal!
- 2. It’s natural to be angry when we’re asked to do something that seems to be beneath us or not who we are.** Naaman resisted washing seven times in the Jordan river. He expected the prophet Elisha to come outside, call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over his disease and then be healed. He even suggests Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus as better than all the waters of Israel. The story I’m going to tell is of my son Skye who today works as a licensed Pipe Fitter for the Board of Water Supply. Years before he was working for a farm on the North Shore and he needed a job with benefits. He began cleaning public restrooms for the City and never once complained. It would have been normal to be angry at having to take such a job. We, as his family were amazed.
- 3. In response to anger, there can be some interventions that can bring about a change.** A young girl captive from the land of Israel who serves Naaman’s wife tells her about the prophet in Samaria who could cure her husband. When Naaman becomes angry when told to go wash in the Jordan seven times, his servants take him aside and have a conversation with him about his reaction. By explaining how easy or how difficult it would be, this transforms Naaman to comply with Elisha’s wishes. Once he did this, his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy and he was clean. Can you recall when you needed to see the doctor and undergo lab tests? When time came for your appointment, you may have become angry at your diagnosis. In this story, Naaman must have gotten angry at having Hansen’s disease. We, too, are human when we become angry at getting sick or being diagnosed with some medical challenge that reveals we need treatment or surgery. It helps if someone can talk to us, giving us the understanding and support we need.

Conclusion. As I've thought and prayed for Kailua Christian Church, I included the grief that Pastor Dale experienced when his wife Beverly passed away on Easter. I also experienced a sense of loss when I learned that he could not remain as your pastor. I thought of you as members and friends of KCC who in January 2021 celebrated the ending of a 5-year interim ministry and now have to revisit the process all over again. When we experience any kind of loss, there are many emotions and feelings including anger. It's important to recognize this anger and to find ways of expressing it. We need to work through our feelings and often this comes when we find someone who will listen to us and empathize with us. We need to know that instead of denying or suppressing our anger, we need to get in touch with it, understand it and let it work itself out of our system. Today's story reveals that we need people who can see what is happening to us and make some interventions. God gave us anger as it helps us express our reaction to difficult things as well as providing ways of dealing with our anger.

Pastoral Prayer

God of Kailua Christian Church, we give thanks for the ministry that continues from Sunday to Sunday. For those who serve in the sanctuary there is appreciation for driving here in order to meet members, friends, and visitors as well as doing what is needed to be done so worship can happen. For those who share their gifts through the ministry of Zoom, we say mahalo.

God of Kailua Christian Church, we give thanks for the lay leadership that continues to serve not only our congregation but the wider community that also includes our Oahu Association and Hawaii Conference UCC. We thank you for our moderator Paul Grable who was seen on Zoom during the business meeting on June 18 of the 200th Aha Pae'aina and for also his attendance at the Spring Mokupuni. We give thanks for our leaders who serve with the Deacons, Trustees and Christian Education boards and those on committees.

God of Kailua Christian Church, we give thanks for Kammy who facilitates the business of the church through the office. We give thanks for the ministry of Na Anela I Ka Hana A Ke Akua and for Myra's continued dedication through the years. There is appreciation for those who serve on the Church Council to keep the church running through all the current challenges. We give thanks for the support given to the families of the late Natsuko Matsushima and the late Hazel Chow as well as Pastor Dale who has retired again from ministry.

God of Kailua Christian Church, we lift up prayers of intercession for so many that are listed in the *June Waves of Faith Newsletter* and are in need of prayer. We would name those we know who are members of the church as well as friends and include those we don't know. We continue to pray for those impacted by the war in Ukraine and the earthquakes in Afghanistan as well as those families that continue to grieve in Uvalde, Texas.

God of Kailua Christian Church, we now lift up the Class of 2022 as we celebrate their accomplishments. We give thanks for Mikayla Maeshiro (St. Andrew's Priory), Monicalynn Martinez (Kailua High School), Taylor-Ann Miyashiro (Seattle University), and Stone Jessee (Kalaheo High School). And we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title 9 on June 23 as the late U.S. Representative Patsy Mink was honored with a portrait of her in the U.S. Capitol.

God of Kailua Christian Church, we continue to pray for the Spirit of Pentecost that we celebrated on June 5th as your Holy Spirit touches our lives. We also pray for "the fruit of the Spirit" from last Sunday's lectionary text from Galatians 5 that we as a congregation will experience your presence. Continue to help us during this "in-between" time as you call us to have faith concerning the future of pastoral leadership. We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.

