

Two images came to me as I read our Scripture for today. The first was of an iceberg. The portion of the iceberg that we see is probably its smallest portion. The rest is keeping it afloat below the water level. (I hope this becomes clear as we continue!).

The second comes from an episode of the television show, *Reba*. Reba's oldest daughter decides to volunteer at a local soup kitchen. She was dismayed when she was given the task of washing dishes. She had hoped to be out front where she could be seen and where they could gaze on her beauty. Washing dishes was not what she wanted to do — who would see her?

Our first reading from II Kings introduced us to Naaman, the general of the army and a leper. He was an important person in the kingdom. He was a leader and had the skills to lead an army into battle. But, he was a leper. He had a skin disease which may have prevented him from having contact with others. We know that Jewish law forbade any contact with others. They were even sent to live outside the community until the disease abated. It was a disease with a grim “stigma” attached to it (remember when AIDS was first on the scene). There was no cure for Naaman in the land.

One of the slave girls that he had captured in battle knows of a prophet who can cure him. The question was simple, “Why doesn't he go and see the prophet?” With the hope of healing Naaman and his entourage head for Samaria and the King - who else would know what to do but the king. The King does not. He sees this as a plot to take over the Kingdom. Elisha, the prophet, sends a message. “Don't worry. Send him to me.”

Naaman heads for the home of Elisha and was greeted by a servant. The prophet does not even come out to greet this “great” man. The simple solution is for Naaman to go and bathe seven times in the Jordan. The muddy Jordan. Naaman throws a temper tantrum. He is angry that Elisha does not come out and perform some magic ritual over him. Imagine going to the doctor and having the receptionist (not even a nurse) give you the prescription for your healing. Naaman is angry.

His servants have a wiser head and confront him (a dangerous thing to do). They have a simple question: “Do you want to be healed?” They know that if he had been asked to do something great he would have jumped to the task. If he had been asked to do something that everyone could see, he would do it (out front greeting, but not in the back doing the dishes). But, to bathe in the Jordan. No one will see him. Does he really want to be healed?

Our second reading has Paul stating that “we reap what we sow”. Paul is warning the Galatians and the church that our actions have consequences. It almost sounds too simple, a “Duh” moment. But look back at Naaman's story. A captured servant girl speaks out, “There is one who can heal.” Why would she tell her captor of someone who can heal him? Was she moved with compassion? It was because of Naaman that she is a slave. Why would she want him healed? Her actions will have consequences. Still, she tells of a hope, a healing.

Then there are Naaman's servants. It was dangerous to speak to a master. They were willing to put their own lives at risk. He has their lives in his hands. “Which is more important to you? Being healed or doing something great?” “Why not do what the prophet asks.” Yes, the Jordan is not a proud and mighty river. There will probably be no one watching. But, there is a chance that you will be healed. This is not just a quick dip though. The instructions say “seven times”. Do you want to be healed?

I wonder how often we forget those who have made something possible. Many long for the spotlight and forget all of those who have supported them along the way. Who helped them get

to where they are. A great poster says: If you can read this thank a teacher. We seldom see or recognize all of the supporting players. How many of you stay at the end of the movie and read all the credits. Or, when you are driving down I-5 do you think of the men and women who worked to design and build the road rather than complaining about the current pot holes? When you eat out do you think of the many hands that went into the meal before you? There was the farmer, the butcher, the bakers, the cook, the prep people, etc.

One of my cousins had a career in the Air Force as a airplane mechanic. He notes that not many of the pilots stopped and thanked him for keeping their plane flying. Yet, without him... Why, even the mighty Mississippi is only mighty because of the thousands of smaller river and streams that flow into it. We often reap only because others have worked hard prior to us.

Naaman reaped because of a servant girl who knew a prophet who could heal him. He was healed not because of the mighty rivers in his land but because of Jordan. He was healed because of a step of faith and because a young girl was willing to share good news.

We sow what we reap. How simple a statement. If we sow discord then it is discord we reap. If we sow hatred then it is hatred that returns. If we sow peace... It is so simple but so many don't seem to get it. The servant girl could have let Naaman suffer. She could have held her tongue. After all he was responsible for her enslavement. She chose differently. For whatever reason she shared the good news of a prophet who could heal. She sowed the good news. What are we sowing? Do we really mind the muddy Jordan?

I recall an episode of MASH (it was on this week). Two of the doctors are asked to write an article for the prestigious medical journal. The task soon leads to each one pointing out what they did. How important they were to the procedure and they end up each wanting to write their own article — they can't agree. The Colonel steps in and points out all of those who played a part in their success. It began with those on the front line who stabilized the patient, the helicopter pilot who got him to the unit safely, the triage staff who worked to keep him alive for the surgery, and on and on. They played a part - but only part.

Naaman was healed because a captured slave girl shared some good news. Rather than ask, "why the Jordan" maybe we should just follow the directions! There might be a message here somewhere.

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988