

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 skin disease!”

2 Kings 5:11

Let the Healing Begin

Once in a while I have mentioned that I have seen more miracles in the life of San Gabriel Presbytery than I have witnessed anywhere else. There have been so many times when God stepped in and provided for us, or made the best of mistakes we made, or made something happen that we could never have imagined! In the panels leading up to our June 14th Summer Fest meeting, it was a joy to hear folks from our own churches talk about ways that God did great things through and for them.

One time I talked about Live Oak Community Church, a joining of two worshiping groups to form a very new and vibrant church in Temple City. Soon after that, folks from other churches would say, “We should do what Live Oak did!” I had to point out that miracles are miracles because they aren’t planned and cannot be called up to happen on cue—they are miracles because they are unexpected and so much more than we could accomplish or dare to imagine by ourselves. Sometimes, those of us who participated in this action of God’s people will talk about how scared we were, yet we sensed that it was God’s call to bring these groups together, different as they were, and so they followed—and God performed the miracle!

The Roman commander Naaman was struck with a skin disease, and he looked everywhere for a cure. He went to the home of the prophet Elisha, and when he came with all his horses and finery, Elisha didn’t even come out to meet him; he just gave a very simple instruction: “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored.” Naaman balked at this, so convinced was he that his condition warranted a more complicated cure, or that his high status demanded more personalized attention. Naaman nearly missed his own miracle because it didn’t happen as he expected!

So often I have seen God’s solution to a problem, but it didn’t make sense to me—or didn’t seem feasible—or actually looked like defeat. More often than I can count, a step forward for God’s realm came out of a defeat in the moment. God doesn’t always act in one step—sometimes the first action puts us in position to take the next step, which is the healing step. And dare I say that the first step feels like failure in order to make us humble enough to accept God’s saving action?

I’m not saying that the answer is always in failure, or that we should automatically do opposite of our common sense—many years ago a Presbytery leader said in describing her evangelical theology, “God gave you a mind—use it!” But if we are willing to consider only what we anticipate, we reduce the work of God to what fits in our own imagination.

We are living in times with horrors too large to fix with conventional solutions. But we are also seeing people, including the people of God, stepping up to do what they can. Individuals have set up underground food distribution programs to provide for those too scared of ICE to go out in public. Folks are standing guard while immigrant workers do their job, in spite of rumors that ICE will take their equipment in an effort to detain them. Residents are giving up their homes, and foundations and celebrities are pledging millions of dollars to contribute to the rebuilding of Altadena. In fact, when I heard that San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity greatly expanded their services, and the eligibility criteria were greatly loosened, I initially said “that’s not possible; they need to identify only those most in need, because resources are scarce.” After I heard that they had received a huge grant that enabled

this expansion, I realized that what I thought was feasible was a pale reduction of what's possible, and even before hearing the data, I would have cut back on what God was enabling.

May we continue to pray that God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, and may we have the faith to be part of God's will, even when we don't understand God's ways. We are agents of faith in this broken world—may we keep our eyes open for evidence of hopes fulfilled, and share the good news of God's amazing grace in our lives, and the lives of our communities.

Peace,

Wendy