



## **Sermons from Northwood United Church**

**“Like a Healing Stream.”  
1 Kings 5:1-14, Mark 1:40-45  
Will Sparks                      February 12, 2012**

May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our lives be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

It was probably close to 25 year ago that I found myself in the Kootenays on a farm. I did not grow up on a farm so I was kind of unfamiliar with the ways of the land. I have vague memories of this particular visit but I remember learning, or more like discovering how to douse for water. It is sometimes referred to witching for water, and I think that is because there is something utterly mysterious and a little bit un-nerving about the process that underlies the ability of some people to identify the presence of water underneath the surface of the earth. But it is real and before that time I had no idea it was possible and certainly had no idea I could do it. I remember walking across the yard of the farm with two rods in my hands, holding them loosely enough that they could swing in my hands, and feeling an unseen force swing them across each other and then as I continued across the yard, swing them back to parallel. It was like discovering a dimension of life that was there all along, that I could be in touch with if I had only known, but that, until I came in contact with people who knew about it I would never have discovered it on my own.

Like a healing stream, the Spirit of God flows, beneath the surface of our living, beneath the membrane of our existence, beneath the geography of every day. At times, if we discover or are led to it, we become aware of one who is there all the time, available for communion, for inspiration, for healing, for calm, for insight, for wisdom, for relationship. I say this not because I have certain knowledge, nor because I can always feel or see, but because I have been surprised, and even astonished by God’s healing presence enough in my life and been led by the stories of others enough to trust that the healing stream runs beneath my feet at all times, though often I don’t trust as much as I could. I have seen a sign and would like to put it above my door sometime, that says, “bidden or un-bidden, God is here.” I do bid, but often, more often than I care to admit, I feel like Namaan.

Namaan, the great and powerful, at least in his own mind. The leader of the armies of Aram- a man of influence in his world- someone whose fingers were on the levers of power- a man of action. Yet there was one part of his life about which he was utterly powerless- his health- his leprosy. Now how well does that describe the human condition? How often are we in situations where in some aspects of our life, we’ve got it all together, but there is one dimension we just can’t seem to grasp, our Achilles Heal.

Namaan can’t see how his power and his illness are connected. I wonder if the healers of Aram had tried to help him, but he would not be helped. Finally, a slave girl, a Hebrew tells him of a powerful healer back home who can help him. So he goes, taking all the trappings of power with him. And you notice that when he pulls up in front of the prophet’s home, the prophet does not react to the flourish- to the riches, to the pageantry. No, he simply sends him unceremoniously to the healing stream. At this point Namaan’s arrogance really surfaces. “O come on! I am a man of distinction! I expect no common healing. I expect healing to come to me in such a way that it will become legendary, talked about for generations: the day when mighty Namaan was healed.” But it was not to be that way for him with God. No, in the eyes of God, in relation to the healing stream, Namaan was just another vulnerable one in need, just a begger

looking for bread, just another someone suffering with leprosy, just like the woman on the street, the child in the bed, the man in the office tower- nothing more, nothing less. That may be hard for Namaan to see, but it is simply the truth.

Fortunately, Namaan is surrounded by wise counsel that knows him well, and they don't let him become his own worst enemy.

It is easy to see the walls Namaan has erected around himself that stand in the way of his own healing. It is often easier to see another than it is to see ourselves. It is often easier to see the unhealthy patterns in the life of someone else than it is to see our own unhealthy patterns. Human beings have an amazing capacity to make the same mistakes over and over again because we cannot see the patterns of our own lives, yet someone else could come along and see clearly.

Like a healing stream, the Spirit of God flows, beneath the surface of our living, beneath the membrane of our existence, beneath the geography of this day. Namaan suffered from the spiritual malaise of pride and arrogance fuelled by nationalism, and these ailments of the soul blocked him from finding that healing stream. He could not see it, but others could. It may be something different for you and for me, but the common thread is the myriad of ways in which the state of our soul effects the state of our whole self- for good or for ill. How many times have you seen a radiant soul enlivening a broken body. How many times have you said, "There is somebody with a good attitude. With an attitude like that, healing is possible."

This is a foundation of Alcoholics anonymous- that the disease of alcoholism has spiritual roots- it is the expression of a wounded soul. And though we have tried with some amazing results over the last 200 years, to quantify and categorize and cure physical illness through scientific method, in the process we have often neglected the place of the soul in healing. Now to be clear, I am not saying that all you have to do is pray hard and you will be healed. The realities of physical frailty and mortality do not go away. Our soul needs to dip in the healing stream of God. There are times when we are in touch and aware of that healing stream and other times when we are oblivious. And it is not that the healing stream disappears, God takes a vacation- it is the state of our soul. There is a small cluster of women in this church who gather every Wednesday and practice their awareness of that deep flowing stream. God calls to us today, and every day, to practice that awareness in some way, to come dip in the waters of the spirit. Come, lay aside your pride, your strength, your fear, whatever temporarily props you up. Or in Jesus' arresting words, "Come to me all you who are burdened, and I will give rest for your soul." Come to the healing stream. Amen