

Sunday 3rd July 2022 (For an all stage worship)

Introductory thought

This morning we are going to think about expectations and how they affect our experience and how we live and pray.

Let me tell you a story – Bill in a China shop (Katie McAllister Weaver) [listen here](#)

Bill was really very careful but because people expected him to be clumsy he got nervous and then he became clumsy. Our expectations of people can change the way we react to them and sometimes that means our actions are misunderstood.

Let me tell you another story, this time from the Bible, about a warrior named Naaman.

2 Kings 5:1-17 - sharing belief

Naaman was a commander in the Aram army. He was a mighty warrior and had won many battles and the King thought a lot of him. However, Naaman suffered with a skin disease, and this made his life difficult, and he often felt unwell. Naaman's wife had a servant girl who had been captured during a battle in Israel. She remembered the prophets from her country and how they had healed people and one day she said to Naaman's wife, "if only the master could see the prophet who is in Samaria, he could be made well."

Naaman's wife told Naaman what the girl had said, and Naaman told the King. The King said, "I will write a letter to Israel's King, you must deliver it immediately". The King quickly wrote the letter and a little later Naaman left with the letter plus a bag full of silver, a bag full of gold, some of the finest cloth and a large group of his men and horses and chariots. They travelled to Samaria and asked to see the King.

They were shown into the King's court and Naaman handed the letter to the King. It read 'the man carrying this letter is my servant Naaman who has a terrible skin disease and I request that you heal him.' The King panicked, the King became angry and shouted because he thought it was a trick, how could he heal this man and if he didn't what would happen? There would be trouble.

Now Elisha the prophet heard what was happening and sent a messenger to the King saying he should send the man to him; he would deal with it and the King of Aram would know there was a prophet living in Israel. So, Naaman was sent to the house of Elisha, with all his men and their horses and chariots. They waited outside while a servant went to tell Elisha they had arrived. Soon, the servant returned with the message that Naaman should go and wash himself in the river Jordan seven times and he would be made well.

Naaman was furious. He had expected the prophet to invite him in, he has expected the prophet to examine him, he had expected the prophet to wave his hands over his body and chant some religious words, and instead he had sent a message with a servant and told him to wash in the Jordan. The Jordan was a filthy river, not like the great rivers in his own country, he could have bathed in those rivers and been healed. He would not go to the Jordan. He stormed away, and his servants followed him.

A little later, after the servants had talked, one of them was sent to speak to Naaman. Master, he said, if you had been asked to do something really difficult would you not have done it? Surely, bathing in the Jordan is not so difficult, so why do you not do it? Naaman looked at the servant and then nodded at the wisdom he had heard, recognising that it was his own pride that was getting in the way. Quietly he walked to the Jordan and removing his outer garments he walked into the river and dipped himself, once, twice three times. Each time he came up from the water he looked at himself, but his skin remained the same. He dipped himself a fourth time, then a fifth and a sixth, but nothing changed. He was about to walk out of the river, but he caught his servants eye and turned back and dipped a seventh time, just as Elisha had instructed.

When he came up from the water a mighty cheer went up. Naaman looked at his skin, it was perfect, no sign of disease. He returned to Elisha's house and this time Elisha was waiting for him. Naaman bowed his head and then declared his belief in the God of Israel. He offered Elisha the gifts he had brought but Elisha would not take them because he had simply been doing God's work. Nothing Naaman said could change Elisha's mind. Naaman then bent and took two handfuls of the soil around him and said then let me take some soil of the land back with me for I will no longer offer burnt offerings to other Gods but worship the holy God of Israel upon whose land I have been cured. And all this happened because a captured servant girl spoke of her belief.

Reflection 1

Naaman's expectations almost prevented him from being healed. Who else in the story felt expectations were being put on him? The King read the letter from the King of Aram and felt trapped. Now, the question is, did he misread the letter or did the King of Aram write it badly. Written communication is often misinterpreted because we cannot hear how somebody is saying something, or see their facial expression, and we can jump to the wrong conclusion. We have to be extra careful when we write something like an email, we have to think 'how will the other person read this'.

We also need to remember that not everything we read is true. We have to be very careful when we read things on social media. Most of the time people only put good news on Instagram or Facebook but we then can interpret it that everything in their life is good and expect our life to be like that and become depressed when it isn't. Sometimes what we read is simply not true and the person wants their life to be better so they write the things they would like to happen to them. Sometimes things are written to confuse or mislead people into acting in a wrong way.

We have to be very careful about our expectations because they can affect what we believe. Naaman was a mighty warrior but he let his belief in himself turn to pride which led to expectations about how people should treat him. We are all children of God and we all matter we must not let our expectations influence how we relate to people but we also need to believe in the power of God within us which enables us to reach our potential.

Song Reach (S Club Seven) [listen here](#)

Reflection 2

Expectations also affect our journey with God and what we believe about God. You might have heard about the earthquakes that have happened in Afghanistan destroying people's homes and killing people. You might have heard people asking why God did that, or why God allowed it to happen. Those questions tell us something about what people believe about God and their expectation of God, but not everyone believes the same thing.

Earthquakes are a natural phenomenon which happen because the earth is a living planet, changing and evolving all the time. Deep within the earth things move and cause earthquakes and tsunamis. We have learnt why it happens and often where it is most likely to happen and yet we still build houses where it might happen and sometimes people do not have the resources to build houses strong enough to withstand even a minor earthquake or even a flood. We need to care for one another better so that everyone has a safe home.

I believe that we have freewill to the extent that we can choose the path of our life through the decisions we make. God is all around and within, and the power that is God is a force for good encouraging me in my decision making but God is not a God who intervenes and pulls the strings to make things happen, we through our decisions chart our path and the path of others. Terrible things happen but we can respond in love and help those who need help, that is being a disciple of God and so later we will take up an offering to help people in Afghanistan.

Our expectations also affect how we pray. We have to expect to see God's love in action in our lives to truly offer a prayer of thanksgiving. If we expect God to intervene and sort things out then our

prayers will be a request to God to do that, but if we recognise that we are a part of God and our actions affect the experience of others then our prayers will be of concern and a commitment to learn how to be an answer to prayer. We need to understand that we work with God, and we have a part to play in how the world is. We want to see a better world but that means we have to change what we do to help that happen.

Song God's amazing children

[Listen here](#)