

Reflection

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by Betty Leon, IHM

Our world is full of incredibly complex realities that befuddle most of us. In such a fractured society, where do we turn with any hope of gaining understanding or relief, much less wisdom or even common sense? The seats of power seem woefully inadequate in offering a way forward. It can lead us to profound discouragement, and wondering at our place in it all.

Judy Cannato, in her book, *Quantum Grace*, offers a radically different view of things through today's readings.

Concerning the reading from Kings: Perhaps because they are named, we could assume that the main characters in the story are Naaman and prophet Elisha. Judy suggests that the *real* story we heard, is not primarily about Naaman's physical healing or even his acknowledgment of the God of Israel. Thinking it was, we'd miss the most significant *action* of the narrative.

Action is initiated by a child, an Israelite slave. "On one level she is powerless and oppressed but ...she does what she can in the circumstances that she finds herself...Her statement...is filled with the pure faith and trust of a child...that what she has heard regarding the prophet-and God- is true. The little girl is the first of the *fringe* people who are instrumental in opening the door for grace.

The other key players are Naaman's servants. When their master goes away angry, they convince him to do as Elisha has asked. "It is about how *fringe* people can become empowered; how those who have no official status are principal actors in the unfolding of God's grace, and how those who have suffered because of the illusion of separation are used to reaffirm connections.

Both the child and the servants have done what God has always asked the faithful to do: *lift yokes and trust in the powerful love of God*. What a supreme irony that the "repairers of the breach" for those who are power-filled have been those who are *powerless*. But that's the way God works. The first shall be last, the last first. The greatest of all shall be servant of all."

Of course, things could have been quite different in the Naaman story. What if the little girl saw herself as an alien and subservient. She could have

thought, “I am just a kid, no one will listen to me. I’d better be quiet”.

The servants could have said “We’re not really part of his family. We’ll be in big trouble if we get him mad. We better be careful and safe”.

What they *did* however, revealed the *caring connections* between them.

That truth continues in the Gospel. Jesus, having no honored title or earthly authority, returns to Nazareth and preaches in the synagogue.

He is a *fringe* person, in perfect position to lift yokes and set people free in the powerful love of God....

His words meet resistance. There is no indication of childlike faith...no evidence of a hope-filled response. They rose up against him. Jesus says, “No prophet is accepted in his own native place.” He is no exception. He has little opportunity to reveal how much God desires to heal the leprosy of disconnection that makes all of us unclean.”

In light of this awareness, let us reflect a moment.

When do I recall the illusion of separateness but forget the reality of connection?

When do I feel like a *fringe* person?

I recall standing at the threshold of a gathering— a meeting, or a meal- and taking a breath before stepping in. Was that breath a prayer for courage, or for faith in the deeper reality of belonging?

When have you been empowered to do God’s work from the fringe?

Will I go to a place in me, filled with childlike faith and hope, whatever my circumstance is presently?

Can the little girl lead us to the wisdom work of connection today?