



## Monday of the 3rd Week of Lent



**Date:** Monday, March 24, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** 2 Kings 5:1–15ab

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 42:2–3, 43:3–4 | **Response:** Psalm 42:3

**Gospel Acclamation:** Psalm 130:5, 7

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 4:24–30

**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

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**I**n the stillness of our Lenten journey, we are called not just to pray and fast, but to open our hearts and minds to the transformative power of God. Today, the Scriptures confront us with two startling truths that we might otherwise overlook: the unexpected ways in which God acts, and how easily we fall prey to the trap of preconception.

In the First Reading, we meet Naaman, a man who, by all human standards, should be beyond help. A mighty warrior, a commander in the army of the king of Aram, Naaman is struck by a debilitating disease, leprosy. His wealth and status offer no remedy. His pride, which serves him well on the battlefield, now stands in the way of his healing. It is a young Israelite slave girl, someone with no power, no title, no standing, who points him toward the cure. Can you imagine it? A child, without a voice in the eyes of the world, offering the key to his salvation. Here lies a radical lesson for us: God's grace often comes through the most unlikely of vessels, through people we least expect, and in ways we might refuse if we are not careful.

Naaman's initial response is that of doubt and resistance. He cannot fathom that something as simple as washing in the Jordan River—so small, so ordinary—could heal him. He expected grandeur. He wanted a prophet to come to him, perform an elaborate ritual, something worthy of his status. Instead, he is called to humility, to surrender his pride, and to trust in something far simpler. It is only when he submits to the humble act of washing that he finds healing—not just of his body, but of his heart.

This, too, is the challenge we face today. Like Naaman, we often expect God to move in dramatic ways, according to our terms, our understanding, our preconceived notions. But the God of Israel, the God of the Gospel, is often found in the ordinary, the humble, the unnoticed. And yet, it is precisely in these moments that we encounter the extraordinary grace of God. Will we, like Naaman, have the courage to lay aside our expectations, to surrender to God's will, no matter how it challenges our perceptions?

As we turn to the Gospel, the theme of rejection and preconception deepens. Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth, where his people expect to witness signs and wonders. They see in him the boy they grew up with, and their familiarity breeds contempt. How can this man, who grew up among them, claim to be the Messiah? How can someone so ordinary, so unremarkable, be the one through whom God's kingdom is revealed? Their lack of faith in him is not simply about their inability to recognize the truth of his words; it is about their refusal to let go of their own preconceptions.

In his response, Jesus recalls the stories of Elijah and Elisha, two prophets who performed miracles for Gentiles—outsiders, people beyond the borders of Israel. The people of Nazareth cannot bear this. If God's favour extends beyond Israel, it means their own privileged position is no longer secure. Jesus' words confront their self-righteousness and expose their lack of openness to God's broader, more inclusive vision of salvation.

What we learn from this moment is that the Gospel cannot be confined to our comfortable expectations. The Good News is for all people, especially those whom society marginalizes. We cannot limit God's grace to those we deem worthy or to those who fit within the narrow boundaries we create. God's love is vast, encompassing the poor, the outcast, and the outsider. Jesus' mission is not simply to reaffirm the righteous, but to call all people—without distinction—into the embrace of God's mercy.

This teaching resonates deeply with the spirit of our Catholic Social Teaching. It challenges us to examine how we view the poor, the marginalized, the outsider. In Zambia, where many still live in poverty, where inequality persists, how often do we find ourselves guilty of the same prejudice that Jesus confronted in his hometown? Do we recognize the dignity of the person in front of us, regardless

of their status, their tribe, their nationality? Are we open to the unexpected ways in which God's grace might be revealed, through the poor, the oppressed, or those who may not fit our conventional moulds?

The words of Pope Francis echo here: "The poor are at the heart of the Gospel." We cannot say we follow Christ if we ignore the cries of the poor, if we allow our own preconceptions to blind us to the face of God in the suffering. Just as Naaman's healing came through a simple act of faith, just as Jesus' message was rejected by those who thought they knew better, we too are challenged to open our eyes to the often-hidden ways in which God is at work in our world.

We need not look far for examples of those who lived this radical openness to God's grace. Let us recall the example of St. Peter Claver, the Jesuit saint who devoted his life to serving the enslaved Africans in Colombia. Claver saw in each person he encountered, not their outward condition, but the dignity that comes from being created in the image of God. He treated each person with love and respect, regardless of their social status or background. His life is a testimony to the truth that God's mercy extends to all, and it calls us to embrace the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed in our own time.

As we continue our Lenten pilgrimage, let us ask ourselves: Are we open to God's grace, even when it comes through unexpected channels? Are we willing to surrender our pride, our expectations, and our preconceptions to the will of God? Will we follow the example of Jesus, who reached out not only to the righteous, but to all—especially the poor, the outcast, the sinner?

Reflecting on these questions, let us consider:

- In what areas of my life am I still holding onto preconceptions about who deserves God's love and mercy?
- How can I open my heart more fully to those who are marginalized, whether in my community or in the wider world?
- What small, humble acts of service can I offer this week that might become a vessel of God's grace to another?

May this Lent be a time of transformation, where we shed the weight of our prejudices and open ourselves to the radical, unexpected love of God.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.