

The Little Servant-Maid

by Raymond Golsworthy

The little maid in 2 Kings 5 is a model for ministry, showing us that being a stranger in a strange land, coming from a background of suffering, and having an unoffended spirit are essential qualities for effective ministry.

Scripture: 1 Kings 16:33, Psalm 115:1, Jeremiah 45:5, Matthew 11:6, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Ephesians 3:8, 1 Peter 2:11

Topics: "Faithful Witness", "Spiritual Servanthood"

Description

Raymond Golsworthy preaches on the remarkable story of the little maid in 2 Kings 5:2, who despite being a stranger in a strange land, among the 'are-nots' of the world, and coming from a background of suffering, became a powerful instrument for God's blessing. Through her unoffended spirit and focus on speaking about Elisha, she exemplified key characteristics that God values in His servants, emphasizing the importance of bearing witness to Christ in a dark and needy world.

Transcript

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife." 2 Kings 5:2

Strange though it may seem, the little maid referred to in this chapter became an outstanding channel for God's blessing to a dark and needy world. Men in high places were blessed through her witness, and, more importantly, we read how a point of testimony for God was established in darkest enemy territory; a place where the true and living God would be worshipped from experience of His power. Because of this, the little maid of our story clearly foreshadows the ministry expected of God's church in the days in which we live. Doubtless this was a privilege which she never dreamed of, but nevertheless it is true. We now hope to list a few outstanding characteristics of that child, learning what we can from her example, and seeing some of the abiding principles on which God ever works. In the first place we note that...

She was a stranger in a strange land.

We read that she had been brought away from her home-country and set down in the land of Syria; enemy territory indeed. All around her were those who spoke a foreign language, and whose habits and customs were entirely different from her own. This also is the case with true Christians today, and we are told that, in this world, we are but "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Pet. 2:11). That, we would say, is a truth which has to be deeply wrought within us if ever we are to be effective instruments for God in our day. We notice next

that...

She was among the 'are-nots' of this world.

She was just a little maid and we do not even know her name! This surely reminds us of Paul's word to the Corinthians, "but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which 'are not' to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29). This must be very reassuring to most of us, and it explains why, sooner or later, God has to bring us all down to size in order to be able to make use of us. We do well to yield to these necessary disciplines and humiliations, remembering that it is the low river-beds that carry the water of life. We remind ourselves, now, that...

She came from a background of suffering.

And what suffering it was; very intense and very personal; but altogether necessary for her allotted ministry! We recall her capture by the marauding bands of Syrians, and all that that would have entailed for a young girl (2 Kings 5:2), and then her being wrenched away from what was probably one of the few remaining godly homes in Israel. She was then carried away to distant Syria, surely a place of awful loneliness for such a child. All this was an indescribable suffering, and perhaps it is mercy that the whole story was not written! But there is another, and perhaps deeper, factor which must not be forgotten, relating to her still earlier years prior to the actual capture. We have to remember those dark times spiritually, and nationally, into which she had been born, when enemies were in the ascendancy and Israel at her lowest ebb. They were the days of wicked Ahab and his successors; the Ahab who had, "Done more to provoke God to anger than all the kings that were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). Idolatry and false worship were everywhere, shaming the nation, and bringing a peculiar suffering to anyone who still had a heart for God. Those were the days of this little maid, and she would have had her share in that deep grief. All this has its clear counterpart today, and we need only say that it is suffering indeed to be surrounded by a decadent Christianity (so called), where there is little or nothing of what could be called a true testimony. But we suggest that all that, (as was the case with the little child) could be essential background for the kind of ministry God now needs. All through the Bible we see the principle that it is suffering that leads on to ministry, and the child in our story is just an example of that. As for her actual 'ministry' in Syria, we note that...

She spoke about Elisha.

We could even say that Elisha was, in fact, the sum total of her message to needy Naaman: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3). Our point is that she spoke about a person, a person with power, Elisha. And so, indeed, must we, though, in our case, it is Someone greater than Elisha! When originally commissioning His church, the Lord said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8), and a survey of the messages given by the apostles at Pentecost, and thereafter, show that that is exactly what they did; they spoke of Christ, they recommended a Person, alive and powerful, just as the little girl had spoken of Elisha. (If we had the time, we could point out how that same Elisha was one of the clearest Old Testament types of Christ, and that in great detail. But here we must refrain.) It needs to be stressed in our day that Christians have not been set in this world just to talk about 'things', even Christian things, but to bear witness to a Christ who is real to us; and certainly so if today's 'lepers' are to be cleansed, and a new kind of worship planted in enemy territory. The

ministry of the little maid certainly anticipates what Paul wrote centuries later: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). The question is: Are we doing it? Do we know Christ enough? Finally, thinking of the little maid, we would point out that...

She had a totally unoffended spirit.

This, surely, is one of the great marvels of the story. Bearing in mind the sufferings she had endured, she could so easily have been bitter and resentful. She could even have harboured some secret delight when she saw the high Syrian officer smitten with leprosy, feeling it was God's due judgment on him, and on his nation. But we find not the slightest suggestion of this; only a deep heart-longing that Naaman be healed. Indeed, she had an unoffended spirit, and that is one reason why she was blessed and made a blessing. Speaking of one in a very similar situation, Christ said: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Matt. 11:6). And, are we not reminded of this little girl when we read the well-known words: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things; ... hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:4-8). That, surely, was the heart and spirit of the little maid; totally unoffended, and only concerned for the welfare of others. As we close, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the little maid was not even mentioned after verse three of 2 Kings 5. What actually transpired when Naaman returned home from Israel, we are not told, and we certainly do not read of any special honours being heaped upon the child. But it would certainly have been in keeping with her character to remain fully content with continuing obscurity. The Bible tells us that we are not to "seek great things for ourselves" (Jer. 45:5), and spiritual Christians always feel themselves fully rewarded when Christ gets all the glory. Their language is always that of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory" (Psa. 115:1). Indeed, indeed, may God give us Christians like that little maid, and a light like hers within the church today.

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