

Introduction

- About sometimes the presenting problem and the real problem being quite different!
 - sore back being something to do with my neck...
 - sometimes because we mask one problem with another...
- Blindness, not leprosy!
 - six characters - four blind, two open eyed

Servant Girl - Open

- Despite her difficult circumstances - including being abducted! - she still has the open eyes of faith:
 - first to be aware of God's work through his prophet Elisha
 - but second she has her eyes open to God's compassion - to see Namaan, who effectively owns her as a slave, with a Godly concern for his well-being
- Do we have our eyes open through faith:
 - not just to God being able to work elsewhere and in theory
 - but here, now, in the midst of those God has placed us with?

King of Aram - Blind

- King of Aram (vs.4-6):
 - blind eyes...
- Why - because he fails to understand the nature of God's grace
 - his understanding of the way things work is a **tit-for-tat, a you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours** relationship between man and God
 - I pay the king of Israel (representative of the nation's God) and he'll cure my soldier... (v.5,6)
- But that's not how God's grace works - freely given!

Joram, King of Israel - Blind

- Blind to God being at work he sees only human intrigue and insult (v.8)
- Do we see God at work in the situations around us, stirring people?
 - or do we only see human intrigue and insult, disappointment, human ambitions and plans?

Elisha - Open

- Elisha's eyes are open to what God wants
 - even his apparent initial reluctance to work (v.10) is in fact designed to help Namaan see the reality of God at work, to understand something of the God who is indeed Lord of heaven and earth, of health and of sickness
 - Elisha is not just guiding Namaan to towards healing, but towards the God who heals
 - another river could have done as well... Elisha could have come out and prayed for Namaan directly... **but of those scenarios would have taken away from God's place as healer**
 - Namaan might have then been healed, but left none the wiser about God!
- Do we introduce people to the healer?

Namaan - Blind, becoming Open

- Blind at first - but listens to something surprising, and critically something **humbling**

- Are we humble, prepared to be brought low, made to look and feel silly and powerless and impotent?
 - a key to open eyes!
 - as is the **obedience** that led him to actually go and bathe

Gehazi - Blind

- One more character - Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who we met last week too
 - ultimately blind to God's ways
 - has all the advantages, knowing Elisha and seeing God at work...
 - but retains his own priorities, not God's - money, not worship and welcome (v.20)
 - and outrageously he is detracting from the free and abundant nature of God's grace!!!
- Elisha is rightly horrified - and pronounces God's judgement (v.26,27)
- Beware lest we take for granted our position round church and God's work - and don't allow him to shape our priorities!

Conclusion: Blind or Sighted?

- *Do I offer prayer at the end of the service?*