

All the stories are OUR stories.

They're all journey stories.

You'll see as we go along that there's a pattern in all this that is a blueprint for life.

Naaman, as we would say today, was full of himself. security in identity, power, wealth,

but with a disease, something unclean

ego and worldly power juxtaposed with shame and powerlessness

Jung

Naaman hears about a possible healing through a prophet. He thinks it's going to be a power exchange—money and fame given to the king and to the prophet in exchange for a grand pronouncement of healing by a famous prophet.

But...when he arrives...The Crown, Downton Abbey. If it was made into a movie...crickets, servant

How frightening for Naaman. How offensive. They're not playing by his rules.

His choices are: go back home and abandon the whole thing or leave the familiar ways of relating and leave his comfort zone.

He found that more of what he was already doing wasn't going to make things better, so if he wanted to be healed, there was only one clear choice.

He humbled himself and washed in the Jordan as instructed. The scriptures say that his skin was as smooth and clear as a newborn baby. Naaman, in his emptiness, has been made clean. He received what he longed for, but so much more than that. The emptying gave him the opportunity to find freedom and started a whole new life. He saw possibilities and realities he'd never had eyes to see before.

Jesus' life follows the same pattern...He journeyed to the wilderness where he emptied himself of the prospects of religious power, military might, wealth, even the status of having a home, a wife, a child, a member of the community. At his baptism, in his emptiness he opened his eyes to see the Holy Spirit coming to fill him with spiritual power. His return to community revealed him as the embodiment of the love of God that changed the world.

Religion taught that being clean meant filling ourselves up with rituals, laws, morality.

Society has taught us that filling ourselves with success, money, social standing,

will help us to feel that we are enough, that we are clean.

Meditation reminds me that "I am enough." But there's always the nagging other voice that says "It's never enough."

Or, I'm enough as long as I keep doing all these things.

So, we keep on trying to fill ourselves up.

(Richard Rohr says that trying to be in relationship with God from our fullness is like 2 balloons trying to make love)

Something that's already full can't be filled.

When we want a drink, what do we look for? A glass that's empty and clean. Imagine if all your glasses are in the sink, filled with soapy water. They're trying to be clean, but they're not empty, and are of no use like that.

God calls us into emptiness, which makes true cleansing, healing, and restoration possible. It's not our job to do the cleansing—our role is to allow the emptying.

So, here's the pattern throughout scripture, and it's the same in our own lives:

Something disturbs us, wakes us up, makes us ill...Joseph, Ruth, (she's left a widow and sitting in powerlessness)

Naaman

Called to a journey away from all that is familiar.

response to the call, taking the first step, like Indiana Jones

Emptying-old familiar ways of being don't work anymore. Disorientation. Vulnerability. Fear.

Baptism/healing/cleansing/seeing with new eyes-the spiritual realm is opened to us.

We see the kindness of God, the possibility of a new, expansive way of living.

We find that the doing flows from being, effortlessly and joyfully.

The empty/clean vessel is filled with the Spirit of God/spirit of life

you get to come home to your true self.

Return to community with gifts and graces, humbled yet possessing great spiritual power.

May you look deeply into the scriptures and find a sacred mirror there.

May you accept the call to journey with confidence and trust.

May you have the courage to embrace emptiness and be filled to overflowing with the power of love through the Holy Spirit.