2 Kings 5: 1 - 19a

Luke 4: 14 - 20

If you weren't here last week - I was saying that the bible is full of stories.
Stories are very different to lists of do's and don't, or instructions.
Not to say that some stories don't have a message, or that they aren't instructional, but they are different.
If you're told Do not take the elevator to the 3rd floor, you might react, engage, take it in.
But that's very different to the story where the 3rd floor is mysterious, or the people who went there and never came back!
Stories invite us to engage - to be involved, in relation, - with imaginations, with heart, soul, with our minds - to question adn think.
A list of instructions - may make us happy or angry, may make us want to comply or to rebel. But they are not the same.

So the bible is full of stories, and Jesus told lots of stories. So I told one about Jesus last week - bad luck if you missed it.
This week I'm going to the old testament - which people say is full of "thou shalt nots" or "an angry god" - so people leave it alone (ignore it)

This story - of naaman is a classic though. Lose yourself in this for a while…

Samuel and Kings are written when Judah was taken into exile in Babylon is more about hope and keeping going.

Chronicles is written after the return - Nehemiah, Ezra, 2nd Temple. Is more people trying to make sense of it afterwards. More about the spiritual, Davidic line and temple

We've already had Elijah - mighty prophet - who trounced King Ahab and Jezebel.
He was a prophet of Isreal - there has already been a split - North and South
He kept the widow and her son alive, challenges Baal, and appoints the next King.

Elisha is chosen as successor - very similar name! Similar miracles, with oil and raising the dead, and helped the next Kings of Israel.

But at this time, Israel was at war with Aram - which is Syria.

A general - puffed up and proud, yet also with Leprosy
A general skin condition. - see Leviticus

His wife's servant girl. Allowed to speak?
God uses the small things - the unremarkable things.

He is desperate, or just this extra thing - I deserve it!

Diplomatic channels, nearly cause more war!

Elisha knows - God has told him.
God loves his enemies!

Naaman arrives, in pomp and ceremony.

Only sends his servant out.

Of all the rivers!!
Humbled, earthed, washed, purified.
Is his leprosy symbolic, guilt - eczema caused by stress.
He knows what he has done, and feels unclean?

Thank God for advisors! Pray for them!

But yes. He is cleansed - what a relief, what a joy!

There is no God in all the World!!

I don't want your money - this isn't how it works

You're not paying for a cure - you're being changed by God
Its not reward or punishment.

You an enemy - yet God is showing he is the God of all the world
Not just Jews, but Gentiles.

Is god honouring the faith of that servant girl - I know God won't let me down.

Yet - he is worried. In his view, the God is tied to the country, the land, the soil.
I cannot go to a different temple. God is jealous, he'll see, he'll strike me down.

Take some soil, be earthed, be reminded of this.
God will be with you, and won't judge you.

It is not about God being on our side, or how God deals with sinners.
It is about a man and his wife, a human, and God revealing his grace at a particular time and a particular place.

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Where were you in the story? Who were you? What did you notice?
What struck you?
What is God saying to you….