

Great Things He Has Done

(II Kings 8:4b)

Session 4 - Care for the Stranger

Talkback with Pastor Stew

- 1) How well-trained are our ushers and greeters to welcome strangers who come into our assemblies (James 2:1-4)? What does the story of Naaman suggest about God's nature to extend mercy and grace to foreigners? Discuss the value added to your church community of certain folks who initially may have been viewed as "outsiders."

Go Deeper

- 2) Jewish narratives often celebrate foreigners of note who experience a conversion and worship the God of Israel. Recall Rahab (Joshua 2:11), and the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-9)...and especially those various kings of Babylon (Daniel 2:46-47, 3:28-29, 4:34-37, and 6:25-27). What "hope" does this feature of the holy scriptures reveal about a biblical theology? How does it help to insulate against any nationalism in the people of God?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review Mark 7:24-30 where Jesus extends the blessings of his kingdom beyond the children of Israel. How does Matthew's story-telling capture not only the essence of first century Jewish parochialism, but also its rebuttal? Remember how another New Testament author (Luke) celebrates the inclusion of a foreigner (Acts 8:26-38) as one of the early, important victories in the Church. How is your congregation today involved in ministries which care for foreigners and aliens, and promote an understanding of a God who is *God in all the earth* (II Kings 5:15)?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #121 ("There's a Wideness in God's Mercy") in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today's lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

"While the musician was playing, the power of the Lord came on him" (II Kings 3:15b)