

**28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2 Kgs 5:14-17; Ps 98; 2 Tm 2:8-13; Lk 17:11-19**

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One theme of importance that could provide a lens through which to see this Sunday's readings is that of the foreigner. In the first reading, a non-Israelite, Naaman, from Syria, is healed. The prophet Elisha accepts no gift from him, but the Syrian takes back with him earth from the Holy Land: he has become a worshipper of the God of Israel. Jesus, in his first hometown sermon (Lk 4:16-30), stated that "no prophet is accepted in his native land," and went on to give two famous examples of good deeds done to foreigners by prophets of Israel: Elijah to the Sidonian widow, Elisha to the Syrian leper. This did not go over well, and his fellow townspeople wanted to kill Jesus.

In the gospel, Jesus heals ten lepers, all Jews except one; the only one who came back to give thanks was a Samaritan, a "foreigner" despised by Jews, and not even on speaking terms (see Jn 4:9). Now, Jesus had told the lepers to show the priests that they had been cleansed, as required by Lv 14. It is hard to understand where the Samaritan could have been headed with the other lepers: they did not worship at the same place or with the same priests. But the point has been made: only the foreigner did the right thing.

In the second reading, Paul is in prison, but the Word of God is not chained. Do we tend to want to chain God and His Word? Do we restrict the area in which God must reign? Are there limits to what we place at God's disposal? A big debate is going on over immigration. This Sunday's readings call on us to be freer with the foreigner, more compassionate. We occupy land that belonged to others, we have welcomed and also enticed great minds and talents to enrich our society, perhaps impoverishing other nations. We now have very humble, poor people in our midst who work very hard at jobs others do not want, setting an example of austerity as they send many funds to loved ones back home who are even more needy. What do today's readings inspire us to think?