

Title: FAITH FACING FEAR, LUKE 19:28-40.  
(Chatham, NJ; 03/16/08, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Jesus uses the stories of the widow of Sidon and Naaman, the leper to challenge the faith of his listeners as he calls them and us to have faith.

Purpose: To encourage us to continue having faith and not to take it for granted or lose it because we are discouraged.

Introduction:

1. See “The Right Call” in *Touchstone*, March 2008, p. 4.
2. When Jesus connects the story of Naaman, the leper and the widow of Sidon in Luke 4:23-30, his challenge to their lack of faith may just be the challenge they need to drag themselves out of their spiritual doldrums.
3. He challenges the lack of faith demonstrated by his home town; he was saying only what was obvious and historically true.
4. The prophetic activity of both Elijah and Elisha occurred during a long period of faithlessness among the chosen people.
5. Though at times faith can be difficult to maintain, we should not lose heart.
6. We must not be of those who shrink back, Hebrews 10:39.
7. Discuss the items specific to each story.

#### I. The Widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:8-16. (Oil and flour)

##### A. The miracle of the oil and flour.

1. Elijah goes to Zarephath to live out the famine.
2. Each day the widow made bread for Elijah and her family.
3. Each day the flour and oil were replenished miraculously.
4. God provided for Elijah, the widow, and her son.
5. No particular reason is given for Elijah’s journey to her house.
6. Perhaps it was a place where Elijah couldn’t be found, see 18:10.

##### B. The significance of the story.

1. Israel was in such a state of faithlessness that God sends Elijah to a foreign nation so that he can survive the famine.
2. It was a sad fact that Israel had fallen prey to idolatry.
3. The famine was a major crisis, and it was the result of their rejection of God.
4. Though they maintained Baal worship, they had never sought the Lord.
5. Even after Elijah’s victory on Mt. Carmel, they continued their idolatries.

#### II. The Healing of Naaman, the Leper, 2 Kings 5:1-14. (Skin care products)

##### A. Naaman’s healing.

1. Naaman is a commander in the Syrian army who is afflicted with leprosy.
2. An Israelite slave girl witnesses to him, 2-3, to go to Israel.
3. Naaman expects great things, but Elisha gives him a simple task, 10.
4. He has to be persuaded to obey, 13.
5. After the seventh time washing, he is healed.

##### B. Naaman proves to be a willing convert.

1. He wants to pay Elisha.

2. He takes back soil from Israel to worship the Lord.
3. He seeks forgiveness for bowing before Syria's idols.
4. Jesus uses these stories to contrast the faithlessness of Israel.

### III. The Call to Faith.

- A. Jesus begins at home, Luke 4:23-30.
  1. He invites them to believe, but they have no faith.
  2. Their faith seems blocked by familiarity.
  3. C. S. Lewis commented on contemporary version of this problem that he calls "overlookability." (Photocopy).
- B. Jesus mission moves toward Jerusalem.
  1. In Luke 9:51 he has set his face to conclude his mission in that city.
  2. In verses 57-62 he formulates the challenge of following him: it will be costly.
  3. Jesus concludes his work by suffering and dieing.
- C. The triumphal entry, Luke 19:28-40.
  1. Though he has commanded the people he has healed for the most part to keep silent about what he has done for them, now he lets them announce him.
  2. It is an unlikely scenario: spontaneous, unplanned, and attention-getting.
  3. His detractors resent it; his followers love it.
  4. Were they to be silenced, the natural world would announce his coming, 40.
  5. This seems to be even more than just some metaphor like we find in Ps. 19:1-3.
  6. Something extraordinary is happening on this occasion.
- D. A call to be involved in the extraordinary.
  1. God can do great things, but he won't act on our unbelief.
  2. This is the message of the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian.
  3. Elton Trueblood differentiates between believing *that* something is true and believing *in* it. For the latter our entire self is involved. It is no easy matter to commit ourselves to such a degree.
  4. Flannery O'Connor, the writer, suggests that we must at some point grow past the childlike faith that merely accepts everything to realize that faith is costly. It is not a big electric blanket; it is a cross.
  5. This is where Jesus was going in Luke 9 and what he will experience after he enters Jerusalem in Luke 19.

### Conclusion:

1. Jesus wants nothing short of our full allegiance: when he demands faith, this is what he is talking about.
2. It doesn't always come easy; it isn't for those merely looking for a comfortable seat on the bus.
3. Faith is a divine call to participate in a divine plan.
4. It will demand the best we can muster and will often involve us in difficult things.
5. Yet the promise of a great Kingdom spurs us on.
6. Keep the faith; God isn't through until Christ comes back.