

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

5th Sunday after Trinity 27th July

Regular Church Services

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am; St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

Meditation

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master. The warrior hero had often returned to his land as a victor, laden with booty. He has given his wife a Hebrew serving girl, captured during a campaign in Israel. Naaman has riches and fame. See how proudly he walks through the streets of Damascus; he walks like an immortal. Then fate strikes: Naaman becomes a leper. Disaster for him and his house; everyone laments. Except for the slave girl from Israel: "My lord your husband must go to our prophet in Samaria; he will be able to make him better." The young thing knows of a mysterious power which could cure the commander of his leprosy. In this story she stands for lady Israel, called to bear witness to God in the world of peoples.

"Your majesty," Naaman said to his ruler, "my wife has heard from our serving girl from Israel that a prophet lives in her land from which I can find healing." "That's good news, Naaman. I shall give you a letter of commendation to the king of Israel, along with ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and cloaks." *Not* a letter of commendation for Israel's prophet – the king of Aram assumes that a prophet is in the service of a king. "With this letter I send you my commander Naaman. Be so good as to cure him of his leprosy and accept these gifts as a sign of my gratitude."

Israel's king tore his garments. How could *he* decide on life and death? "Am I God, that I have the power over life and death? Of course the king of Aram is looking for a pretext to attack us." In his fear he neglected to do what a good king would have done: send the unfortunate Naaman to the man of God. A serving girl living in distant Aram understands more about that! Fortunately, Naaman's arrival didn't remain hidden from Elisha: "Why, your majesty, have you rent your garments? Let this man come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Elisha's sons of the prophets didn't believe their eyes when they saw the stately procession of Aramaean carriages and horses riding past, and Naaman

didn't believe his eyes when he saw the simple hut in which the man of God lived. He was too proud to go in, and Elisha didn't come out; he sent Gehazi, his servant. Does the prophet know who he has before him? "My master says that you must go to the river Jordan and wash in it seven times. Then your body will be healthy again; you will be clean." Naaman must perform a ritual. He has to bathe in the water of the holy river and do so in a holy sequence. He must immerse himself in the Jordan and thus in Israel's history. Where the Eternal One has made a new beginning with Israel, he wants this man from the pagan world to make a new beginning. "Wash in the Jordan."

That was too much for a great man like Naaman. Or rather, it was too little. He's being treated like a small boy. He has to put aside his pride and arrogance, his uniform and royal accoutrements. Then he must go down into the Jordan, a ditch compared to the Abana and Pharpar, the broad rivers of Damascus. Naaman had imagined a different kind of reception: the prophet coming out with great ceremonial, solemnly invoking the name of his God and meanwhile waving his hands over the white patches on his skin. Insulted, Naaman turned round and gave his drivers orders to return to his own land. "I don't think that he's going to the Jordan," said Elisha's servant when he got back. "That's a shame," said Elisha.

But Naaman did go! In this story, in which kings fall short and subjects bring about salvation, it is Naaman's servants who put their master back on the right track. One of them speaks, "My father, if the prophet had asked something great of you, you would certainly have done it. Nothing would have been too much for you. Why then is this simple thing too little? You are willing to spend gold and silver on a cure; is it too much to ask you to make a few dips in the Jordan? A child can do it!" Naaman heard the wisdom in the words of his servant. Now he understood what the prophet required of him: he was to become like a child. He went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, confidently surrendering to the mystery of Israel. *'Naaman's flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.'*

The great man who had become like a small boy hastened back to Elisha with his followers. "See, now I know there is no other God on the whole earth than the God of Israel. May your servant offer you a gift?" "The Lord forbid that I should accept your gifts." Naaman urged Elisha to accept, but he was not to be persuaded. Then Naaman said, "Give me then a load of earth from your land, as much as a pair of mules can carry. I shall never again offer sacrifices to the gods, but only to Israel's God."

Naaman has gone through the Jordan; he has become part of Israel, incorporated into the people of the Torah, and to express his abiding bond with the land of promise he wants to take a load of earth from that land back home. “May the Lord, your God and my God, forgive me if I enter the temple of the god Rimmon with the king of my land. The king then leans on my arm, so I too must bow to Rimmon.” From now on Naaman will have to live in two worlds, and that can’t be done without compromising. He asks the man of God in advance for forgiveness. “Go in peace.” Naaman went.

Gehazi looked on, gnashing his teeth. His master has just let Naaman go, with all his silver and gold! That rich Aramaean dearly wanted to hand over his gifts, but the prophet preferred to remain poor! Gehazi ran after the coach. Naaman saw him coming, stopped and jumped down from the carriage. “Is all well?” “All is well,” replied Gehazi, “We suddenly have guests, and to tell the truth we have nothing in the house. Now my master asks whether you can perhaps give us a talent of silver and two cloaks.” “I shall give you two talents of silver and the cloaks besides.” Naaman was glad that he could still do something; he felt bad that all his wealth was still on the beasts of burden. And Gehazi was glad that he could relieve him of some of his burden. When Gehazi got home he hid the treasures, and cheerfully returned to Elisha’s dwelling.

“Where have you come from, Gehazi?” “I? I haven’t come from anywhere, sir.” “Wasn’t I with you in the spirit, Gehazi, when a man jumped from his carriage for you? Did you think it necessary to enrich yourself? Naaman’s leprosy shall come upon you and your descendants, for ever.” Gehazi went away, as leprous as snow.

Naaman was a great man in Aram. He came to Israel, became like a little boy and was cleansed. Gehazi was a little man; he let go of Israel, he wanted to become great, and he became unclean. Whether he found healing, just like Naaman, the story doesn’t say.

Prayers

We pray for strength to follow Jesus.

Saviour, we hear your call, help us to follow.

Jesus said; “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.”

Renew your Church in love and faithfulness; and help us to serve you with joy.

Jesus said; “Unless you change and become like little children you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Let not the needy be forgotten; nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Jesus said; “Blessed are the humble; they will receive what God has promised.”

Make us instruments of your peace; and let your glory be over all the earth.

Jesus said; “Be merciful as the Father is merciful; love your enemies and do good to them.” Make your ways known upon earth, Lord God; your saving power among all peoples.

Jesus said; “Love one another as I have loved you; there is no greater love than this, to lay down your life for your friends.” Guide the leaders of this and every nation; that justice may prevail throughout the world.

Jesus said; “Go to people everywhere and make them my disciples and I will be with you to the end of time.” Saviour, we hear your call, help us to follow.

God of mercy, you know us and love us and hear our prayer: keep us in the eternal fellowship of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Future Events for your Diaries

AUGUST

Thu 14th St John Toddlers Beach Party.

Fri 15th VJ Day Service **12noon** War Memorial

Sat 30th Model Railway Exhibition St Mary

Sun 31st Armed Services events in Park, Service at 5pm.

SEPTEMBER

Sat 13th CMS Concert at St Peter's

Sat 13th "Ride and Stride" Walk, Cycle etc

Sat 13th Working Party in St Mary's Churchyard

Sun 14th Sept Musical afternoon St John's Choir
at 129 West End – Refreshments and Raffle

Sat 20th St John's Autumn Fair

Sun 21st Harvest Festival at St John's

Sat 27th Lions Event at St Peters

OCTOBER

Sun 5th Harvest Festivals at St Peter & St Mary

Sun 5th 2.30pm 3Counties Masonic Service St Peter

Sun 12th 1 for 1.30 Harvest Lunch at Maureen's

Sun 12th 4pm Choral Evensong St John's

Sat 18th Bondi Concert 7pm St John's

Sun 26th Mourners Service at St John's 4pm

Tues 28th Mourners Service at St John's 10am

Wed 29th Mourners Service at St Peter's 10am

NOVEMBER

Sat 1st Requiem at St Peter's 10am

Sun 2nd Mourners Service 9.15am St Mary's

Sun 2nd Mourners Service at St Peter's 4pm

Sat 8th St Mary Coffee Morning at Sue's

Sat 8th CMS Concert St Peter's 2pm

Sat 22nd St Peter's Christmas Fair

DECEMBER

Sat 6th St John's Christmas Fair/ Choir Singing

Sun 7th Dec 1pm Christmas Lunch at St Mary's

Fri 12th – Sun 14th Christmas Tree Festival
at St Peter's, with Christingle Sunday 3pm

Wed 17th-Fri 19th Winterwonderland at St John's

Sat 20th Dec St Mary's Coffee Morning at Roger's

Sunday 21st Carol Services 3pm St Mary,

4.30pm St John, 6.30pm St Peter

Regular Church Activities at St Peter's

Tuesday

10am-12noon Knit and Natter;

1st St Peter's MU 2.30-4pm 3rd Deanery MU

Wednesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

1st Study Group 7.30-9pm **Next Aug 6th**

2nd Wed Christian Aid Lunch Hall 12-1pm

First Thursday No August meeting.

Next, 4th Sept, June Jackson on work in Prison Service.

St John's Church Activities

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

9.15-11.15 St John's Tots;

Tuesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

2nd Study Group 11-12 **Next Aug 12th**

Study Group 7pm-8.30pm; Film The Chosen

Wednesdays

Thursday 1st Thursday Social Group (see above)

Friday Choir Practice in Church 7pm

6th Sunday after Trinity 27th July

Welcome to St John the Evangelist, St Peter & St Mary Churches in the March Team

Regular Sunday Services

St John 9.30am Sung Communion

First Sunday of each Month 9.30am Wholeness
Service with Laying on of Hands

MESSY CHURCH 1-3pm

3rd Sunday of the month, not in August

St Mary 9.15am Traditional Sung Communion

St Peter 8am Holy Communion

11am Sung Communion

*Last Sunday of each month, **Sunday Club***

*The next sessions will be THIS WEEK, 27th July at 11am
and we plan to come into church for communion.*

There will be no session in August (31st).

TUESDAY St John's; 10am Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY St Peter's; 10am Holy Communion

Zoom services

Sunday 5.15pm Team Service

Thursday 8.30am Morning Prayer

Team Rector: Rev Andrew Smith 01354 572117

andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

*All enquiries about Weddings Baptisms etc to Andrew
Baptisms; 12.30 St Peter; 2pm or later St John St Mary*

Team Leader in Mission Ruth Clay 07905950849

RevRuth.marchchurches@outlook.com

Clergy; Jane Rees 463284, Anthony Chandler 652894,

Jenny Webb 650855, Mother Jane Dicker 661099

Readers; Hannah Taylor 661712, Diane Wise 651512.

Karen Pritchard karen.marchchurches@outlook.com

Next Sunday, Aug 3rd, 7th Sunday after Trinity

2 Kings 8 v1-6 & 13 v14-20, Luke 1 v13-21

BAPTISMS

12.30pm St Peter's; Tayla Lea Randall

2pm St John's; Alfie Winston Hilton

WEDDING

Friday 15th August 3.30pm St Peter's

Gary Cooke & Rebecca George-Layton

FUNERALS

Wed 6th 11.30am St John's; George Smith

Thurs 7th 2.30pm Fenland; Geoffrey Cole

Thurs 14th 12.30pm St Peter's; Leslie Newstead

**Thanks to Ruth & James
and all who supported St Mary's Bar-B-Q**

*Please let Andrew know of any correction, additions or
further details*

Prayer, Collect, for this week

Loving Father, with the prayer your Son taught us always on our lips, we ask, we seek, we knock at your door. In our every need, grant us the first and best of all your gifts, the Spirit who makes us your children. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, and for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Old Testament 2 Kings 5 v1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.' So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, 'Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.' He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, 'When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.' When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.' But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.' But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, 'I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?' He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, 'Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, "Wash, and be clean"?' So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of

the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.'

Gospel of Luke 11 v1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.'

And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Prayer after Communion

Lord of gifts, share with us a hunger for the bread of your kingdom; give to us a yearning impatience with injustice; free us from clinging to debts gone bad; teach us to pray with honesty in words filled with earth and lit by desire; through Jesus Christ, our Jubilee. Amen.

Saturday 6th Sept – Quiet day at St Mary's Led by Mother Jane

Volunteers are urgently needed for the **Community Hub** run by Anna Godfrey through Cambridgeshire Acre. Wednesdays 12:30 to 2:30 in St John's Hall. Please see Anna for details.

Wednesday 27th August

Christian Aid Garden Party

2-4pm at the Rectory

All Welcome

Next Choral Evensong

Sunday 10th August 4pm at St John's
All Welcome