“Faith Healing”

2 Kings 2:1-14

Rev. Rebecca Weaver Longino

First Presbyterian Church, Luling, TX

November 2, 2014

Wizard of Oz is the most seen movie worldwide

Favorite of mine as a child…

Journey of Dorothy

Starts out in a black and white world on that Kansas Farm.

Things aren’t going her way, as her dog Toto’s life has been threatened.

She runs away, a tornado sweeps through so she seeks the safety of home.

Her house is swept up in the storm and when she awakes, she finds herself and Toto in the magical land of Oz.

I used to hold my breath when she opens the door and finds that Technicolor splendor before her.

It’s a beautiful place, but she just wants to get home.

She is told to go find the Wizard, because he is the one who can help her.

Along that yellow brick road, she meets strange friends, has to do odd tasks.

Eventually meets the Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz

But he turns out to be an ordinary man who knows his way around pyrotechnics.

Dorothy is disappointed when she learns that he is no wizard at all and that he cannot help her return to Kansas.

It seems she is stuck in Oz forever.

Glinda the Witch shows up just in time and reveals that the power has been inside of her the whole time.

Click heels three times and say “There’s no place like home.”

Dorothy finds herself back home with Auntie Em and Uncle Henry, having learned a thing or two about wisdom and love and courage and home.

She had to go through that journey in order to learn about life and family.

Naaman takes a similar journey as Dorothy.

Not looking for home but for healing of his skin ailment.

It was interfering with his career. Stigmatizing him in the community.

It seems his situation is hopeless and he will die with this disease.

But then a humble servant girl suggests a source of healing.

Even though he invaded her home country, killed her family and kidnapped her, making her a slave of his household.

She shows grace and mercy.

She offers his healing opportunity to speak with a prophet in her homeland

So off he goes.

He takes a boatload of money and clothing, expecting to pay a high price for this magical healing from the prophet.

He also takes a very official letter from the king, granting permission and actually ordering the prophet to heal is army commander.

Naaman thinks he is equipped with all that he needs to buy his treatment.

Gets to Samaria and is surprised by the king’s reaction.

He’s upset at this request and won’t help him.

This is like Dorothy’s encounter with the Wizard. She expected him to help, but he turned out to be an imposter, unable to get her home.

Naaman expected this king to be able to help – after all he brought money and an official letter! Surely that would buy his way to healing from his disease!

The Prophet Elisha gets word of this and reveals that he knows how Naaman can be healed.

Elisha takes on the role of Glinda the Good Witch, the one who knows the simple solution for the problem.

Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and you will be healed.

This is that muddy creek which will bathe another man in roughly 700 years.

Later on, these waters provide baptism which bring grace and salvation to the world.

Naaman gets angry and refuses.

Too simple a cure for his liking.

He expected something more extravagant. Something more complicated.

Something more fitting for a commander in the army.

Slaves convince him, asking, “what’s the harm in trying?”

So he does it.

7 times he dips into the waters of the Jordan.

He comes out clean and restored, free of his disease. His skin is like new.

It isn’t what he expected, but it is so much more beautiful than he could have imagined.

What Naaman learns is that his healing was found in ordinary water, blessed by God.

Not only is his skin change to newness, his heart is as well. His pride is softened and grace enters in.

Like Naaman, many of suffer from ailments in our lives – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual.

We suffer daily of these diseases and heartaches.

They make it hard to live, they make it hard to function. They isolate us from the world.

Like Naaman, we expect some spectacular cure – the magic pill that will fix what ails us.

We are lured in by infomercials promising 20 pound weight loss in 2 days.

Or that miracle cream which will erase wrinkles.

We want our healing to come from special, extraordinary means.

A doctor friend of mine often speaks about how simple most remedies are.

Changes in lifestyle of even the smallest level can make a big impact on healing.

But even when we’re told a simple solution, we resist and fight it.

Eat more vegetables? No thanks, pass the Doritos.

Drink more water? Why, when I can drink a bucket of Cola?

Spend time in prayer each day? I’m too busy for that.

We make excuses because we don’t want the simple solution.

Of course there are physical diseases that require complicated medical help.

But many of our ailments – those of the emotional and spiritual type, can be healed by simple measures.

It doesn’t take a great and powerful wizard to get us on our way.

We don’t need some magical prophet to wave his hand over us and heal our pains.

For Naaman it was a dip in a muddy creek.

It was allowing his body and his soul to be cleansed by water.

This story helps us see how God works through some of the most simple elements.

Water. Bread. Wine.

These are the bases for the two sacraments in our church.

Simple water bringing cleansing and grace through Baptism.

And the bread and the cup that are taken in communion.

They remind us that God’s grace and healing don’t usually flow through complicated, extravagant ways.

God offers healing and restoration through simple means.

Ordinary elements.

If we want to be made well, we have to listen for when God speaks.

We have to be open to those simple healing remedies that God provides.

Like Naaman, we must trust that God works through ordinary things.

Bringing healing

Bringing wholeness.

Bringing restoration.

Thanks be to God. Let us pray.