

The Maidservant's Story



Annie

Scriptures:

2 Kings 5:1-19

"and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel"

As dawn broke in brilliant apricot hues and split the dark sky, Miriam quietly got up, rolled up her mattress and slipped outside of the small room she shared with the other household servants. This was her time, the only few moments of her day that she could spend in prayer and worship to the God of her fathers. She began reciting the prayers she had learned from her mother, but, as always, her heart overwhelmed her and the tears overflowed. Her prayers became pleas for God to keep her family safe, for them to remember her, the child who had been stolen, taken captive by the armies of the Syrian king. Prayers that they could somehow know she was safe, that her mistress was kind to her, that she was treated well and that she was as happy as she could be as a slave in a foreign land.

As Miriam went about her duties, she watched her mistress and saw the distress in her face and eyes. Miriam had known from the day she had been taken into their household that her master and mistress were unhappy. Naaman was a man of great influence, he was a commander of the army of the king of Syria, he held a position of power and authority and was regarded by all as a mighty warrior. Through Naaman's leadership and skills, Syria had won great victories and he was favoured by the king. It was Naaman who led the king into the house of their god, Rimmon, when the king went to worship. But, Naaman was a leper.

Miriam knew all about leprosy, she had seen lepers in the land of her birth. She knew that leprosy was a scourge that could destroy lives, break up families and cause great heartache. Yet she also knew that the prophet in her homeland would be able to cry out to the Lord God of Israel for healing for Naaman. What could she do? She was a slave, a serving girl; who would listen to her? In her heart she knew with no doubt that the God she prayed to each day, the God she trusted, could heal her master, but she lived in a foreign land where her God was not recognised or worshipped. Who knew what would happen to her if she even mentioned her God? Would she be punished, beaten, maybe even killed for daring to do this. She had heard that the god, Rimmon, was worshipped as a god of war, of thunder and lightning and storm. Not a god of love and mercy, not a god of healing diseases.

But each time she looked at her mistress and saw her sadness, watched as her mistress sat alone in her garden and wept, Miriam felt a burning deep within her that wouldn't go away, a conviction that she had to tell her master and mistress about her God who she loved so dearly. She made a decision, a brave decision, that she was not going to hide her faith, no matter what it would cost her, she was not going to be ashamed of the LORD, the God of Israel.

As dawn broke the following morning, Miriam prayed, this time for the courage to carry through the decision she had made, that she would bear witness to

the greatness of the LORD and tell her mistress what the prophet in Israel could do for her master, Naaman. A deep peace filled her heart, she would not be ashamed of her faith, she would be prepared to bear witness even if it meant dire punishment.

She carried the pitcher of fresh water into her mistress's room and, as she gently helped her mistress bathe, as she brushed her mistress's hair, Miriam cried out to God, "Give me the words, Yahweh, give me the words". When her mistress was bathed and clothed, Miriam knelt before her and asked permission to speak. Her mistress nodded and in the softest of tones, Miriam spoke the words her God had given to say

"Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Her mistress took Miriam's hand as the tears flowed down her face, together they walked to the apartments of her husband, Naaman. Once again Miriam spoke the words, the overwhelming words that would change the lives of her master and mistress forever. After hearing her words, Naaman went to his king and told him what Miriam had said and the king, who so highly valued the service and valour of his commander Naaman, immediately wrote a letter to the king of Israel and arranged for Naaman to take gifts of silver, gold and fine clothing. So Naaman and a group of faithful soldiers, left to visit the king of Israel.

When Naaman returned from his trip to Israel, his wife was overjoyed and astounded. Her husband was cured, his flesh had been restored, like the flesh of a child, he was clean and free from leprosy. And, he now worshipped and had faith in the God of Israel. He told his wife of the strange things the prophet Elisha had told him to do, to dip himself in the River Jordan seven times. He recounted how he had been angry and had refused to follow the prophet's direction but had been persuaded by his men. How, after he had complied, he had been wonderfully and miraculously healed, just as Miriam had said he would be.

Miriam's willingness to openly declare her faith and place her trust in the LORD God of Israel changed the lives of those around her. Her courage in deciding to declare that her God was a God of mercy and healing was the first step on this road. One small step that altered the course of history.

Little did this young servant girl know that hundreds of years later the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, would come to the earth, would live and die, and rise again, forever alive. That He would bring salvation and eternal life to all who believe in Him and choose to surrender their lives and allow Him to live in them. She would never know that her courage would provide an example for all believers to follow in obedience to the words of the Apostle Peter *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"*. (1 Peter 3:15)

The young servant girl faithfully and humbly continued to worship the Lord God in her heart, surrounded by idol worshippers in the land where she was a captive slave. She was ready to meekly declare the hope that she carried, whatever it may have cost her. God had placed her where she was for His

purpose and His glory. Her obedience and humility performed that purpose, and Naaman's new found faith brought glory and honour to the God of Israel who she served so well.

In humility and with respect, she had not been ashamed to speak of her faith and the hope that lived and blossomed within her

Prayer: Lord God, open the eyes of our hearts to see the example set by this young slave girl, and to learn from her that living in the Kingdom of God is always a matter of choice. Potentially a dangerous choice, but always worthwhile that You, God, may be glorified in and through us. Amen