

Speaker 1:

(singing)

The Rev. Dr. Calvin Jones:

I must say, every morning that we come to Morning Prayers, aren't we blessed? Now, I know I'm not Kevin Bryant, so I hope y'all love me, all right? I know you hear me all the time. He's not feeling well, so I prepared a message for you all, that I hope we'll bless you throughout the rest of your day.

2 Kings, one scripture, chapter five reads, "Now, Naaman, captain of the host of the King of Syria was a great man with his supervisor, and honorable because by him, the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria. He was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper."

I've always been a dreamer, Suzanne. Sometimes I would sit on the porch when I was a kid and dream of preaching to hundreds. I would stand in front of my toys and declare God's word of love and justice. I would shout and sing to the birds, the cows, and horses, and I would even shout of God's glory to the cotton fields of North Carolina.

But I should never forget, one day when I told my first grade teacher that I wanted to preach, to stand up for justice, to go around the nation and world, to make the world a better place; I told her that I wanted to spread the message of love through preaching and through song, and she responded by saying, "Yeah, you may have a dream to do those things, but you are from the country fields of North Carolina. You may have a dream to do those things, but you are from a poverty-stricken Black community. You will never be able to do those things."

It was in this moment that the conjunction, but, seemingly hijacked the joy, hope, spirit and dreams that I had. And in the text this morning, we also see a man who has accomplished, who has dreams, who I'm sure has a number of accolades, and who has wanted to do more with his life, but the writer in one verse, in the same verse says, "But he was a leper." But he had leprosy. But he was limited. He was accomplished, but he was a leper. He was successful, but he had some wounds and some hidden scars. The word but is a conjunction that to seemingly negate everything that you hope to do.

In other words, he was a commander in the army, but he was a leper. It would appear that his condition, location, everything that surrounded him, the opinions of others' fears and doubts would crush him from being all that God had called him to be. And I don't know who I'm talking to this morning here at Morning Prayers, but sometimes if we would be honest, we all have had or may have some but in our lives right now. We all have had some. I would do this, but. I would go here, but. I would seek after this, but. I would follow my dream, but. I would do this or that, but, it doesn't appear that I can do it.

We all have had the conjunction but in our lives, but just because the conjunction but has been placed in your life, it doesn't mean that God cannot use you. Whatever it may be in your life, God can use you. Can I call the role? Even in the literary corpus of the Bible, we see that God turns conjunctions, that others have given, but, and uses that but in a positive way.

Abraham was extremely frail, but he was the father of faith. Noah struggled with an addiction, but he built an ark. Jonah ran from God, but he saved the people of Nineveh. David struggled in his life, but his heart was after God. Paul persecuted the early Christians, but he preached a liberating gospel to the Gentiles. Gideon was insecure, but he was a judge. Miriam was a gossip, but, but, but, but, she eventually sang God's praises. Martha was a worrier, but she pummeled the words of Jesus in her heart. Thomas was a doubter, but, but, but, he became an apostle. Sarah was impatient, but she brought forth life. Elijah was certainly moody, but eventually he prophesied. Moses did not believe that he could be a leader for God's people, but he interceded for Israel. Lazarus was dead, but, but, but, he got up, got up, got up, got up to tell the good news.

I don't know who I'm ministering to this morning at Morning Prayers, we all have had struggles, and limits, and fears, and doubt; but wherever there may be a but in your life, God can use that but. Although Naaman had some but in his life, later in the chapter, he stepped in the river of Jordan and leprosy fell off. Well, you may say, "Calvon, what about you? The first grade teacher told you that you were not being to preach." Well, I'm looking at you. And I want you to know that even though people try to place but in your life, seek your dream, use your voice. Use your voice. Remember, they may have said it, but God has a plan.

Please stand for prayer. Loving God, your people this morning may have faced some conjunctions in their lives. They may have faced some but in their lives, but I know that you can use them for whatever the fear or limit may be. Loving God, extend your mercy and grace upon them to do all that which you have called them to do. And is in your liberating, loving name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvon Jones:

Now, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples saying:

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Calvon Jones:

Now, let us sing together, hymn number 341, found in your hymnal, In Christ There is no East or West.

(singing)

As we leave this place, but never away from God's presence, may you be able to face the but in your life, knowing that in Christ there is no East, nor West, nor North, nor South. Nothing is impossible for what God has called you to do. Go in peace.