

The Parish of Wellow

Naaman - The Commander in Chief

2 Kings 5:1-15

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage

2 Kings 5:1-15

- 1 Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.
- 2 Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.
- 3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."
- 4 Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said.
- 5 "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing.
- 6 The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."
- 7 As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"
- 8 When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."
- 9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house.
- 10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."
- 11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy."
- 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.
- 13 Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"
- 14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.
- 15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant."

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Outwardly Naaman has everything going for him; wealth, career, success and influence but 2 Kings 5:1 'he had leprosy'. God often uses 'crises' in our life to wake us up to what truly matters in our lives. Naaman discovers through his crisis of leprosy that he needs to:

- i. Seek God in order to solve his problem. (verses 3 - 12)
- ii. Submit to God's plan in order to receive his cure. (verses 13-14)
- iii. Trust God to deliver. (verse 15)

2.2 Naaman discovers through his crisis of leprosy that he needs to seek God in order to solve his problem. (vv 3 - 12)

- Who or what are we seeking today? Naaman clearly needs to seek God in order to be saved. God brought him that blessing, but only through a crisis. Very often, God does the same for us. Crises in life may well be the wake-up calls for us to turn away from our worldly pursuits and back to Him.
- Naaman's wife's maid introduces Naaman to a prophet in Israel who can help. So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. (5:5).
- He went first to the King of Israel, and was later directed to the prophet Elisha's house.
- Elisha's servant comes out and tells him to wash in the river Jordan, a small insignificant river when compared with the Abana and Pharpar back home in Damascus and worse still Naaman is asked to wash in this insignificant backwater no less than 7 times.
- Naaman must have thought, "Who does this guy Elisha think he is talking to?" So there's no wonder that Naaman feels angry and resentful at way he has been treated. "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy."
- Very often, we come to God in the same way. We have our plan and we expect God to say yes to it. "Lord, give us a cure we say. Wave your hand and let our problems disappear. And we will be on our way." We want God to save us - to fix our problems but so often we want those fixes in the way we have planned them.

- So why does God make it so difficult for us? It's not difficult, just different - God's concern is not just physical healing - He wants to see faith, He wants to see obedience, He wants to see humility. He wants us to receive the Giver, not just the gift. A crisis in our life may well be God's tool to create submission in us, for us to learn what it means to obey His will and not our own.
- Obeying God was not what Naaman was expecting. He thought he could come and buy his cure. But God wanted to save his soul. God wants Naaman to put his faith in Him, to submit and to be obedient to his words. God wants so much more for Naaman than his mere physical healing if only Naaman realised it.
- The worst thing that can happen is for us to walk out on God even before we receive His healing; not because God is not willing, but because of our lack of faith; not because God cannot heal, but because we do not want to submit to His ways. It would be sad if we want things our own way and lose out on God's countless blessings for us.

2.3 Naaman discovers through his crisis of leprosy that he needs to Submit to God's plan in order to receive his cure. (vv 13-14)

- Naaman's servants plead with him "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" (5:13)
- The servants are in fact saying, "what do you really want Naaman?" Do you want to be healed? It's so simple what you have been asked to do - wash and be cleansed. What would you prefer, they say to keep your "face" and leave with your reputation in tact or to strip yourself of your dignity and wash in the Jordan seven times and be cured of your life threatening leprosy.
- "So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy." 5:14
- That's why we need Christian friends, we need brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to develop and protect our fellowship with them. So I would encourage us to build relationships with a few close Christians - those who are close enough to know our problems and who are not frightened to prompt us to do the right things.

2.4 Naaman discovers through his crisis of leprosy that he needs to trust God to deliver. (v 15)

- It's easy to trust God for something you've already seen Him do before. But Naaman's circumstance wasn't easy - he had a terminal disease, and nobody he knew had ever been healed of it.
- To an army General, this was difficult. It took great faith on Naaman's part to trust God's words and to step into that water but when he did he not only did he receive physical healing but God saved his soul as well. "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel." Naaman declares.
- Naaman discovers not only that God is a powerful God, but he is God in whom you can put your complete trust.
- Are we facing a crisis in our lives, like Naaman at the moment? ...maybe a physical ailment that has been a lingering problem? ... Maybe a crisis in our marriage? ... Maybe a hopeless situation at home or with the family? Do we trust God in this crisis situation? Are we prepared to pray and to submit to His way?
- Naaman was forced to look away from his own achievements, his own wisdom, his own strength and to put his trust in the God of Israel. Today we must do the same. We must stop focusing on the circumstances and start trusting God! God doesn't need a precedent to do something great. We can trust Him in all circumstances to do the very best for us.

2.5 God uses a maid to save Naaman and his servants to encourage him to do the right thing.

- Today we are these servants.
- So let's look out for the Naamans around us, some will be in our churches, others among us at home or at work. They are our neighbours, our colleagues, our family, our teachers, our friends.
- When God puts us close to someone - colleagues, family, neighbours - He gives us the privilege to know some things about these people: their pains, hurts, illnesses.
- God does it so that you and I can speak a word that would give them hope, a word that can sustain them. They need people like us who will reach out and touch them, who will love them, who will see their pain and tell them where they can find help.
- God has placed each one of us where we are to make a difference. Treasure the privilege we have that no one else has. And let the words we say bring hope and life those around us.
- As in Naaman's case, it may well make the difference between whether a person will live or die.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 What does Naaman have to do to receive the cure to his terminal illness? What do we have to do to receive the cure to our own terminal illness, sin? Does Naaman earn his cure? Do we need to earn ours? Why do we spend so much time trying to get on the right side of God by doing good works or by performing religious acts? Like Naaman why do we find it so hard to receive a free gift?

3.2 Who would you consider to be your close Christian friends? Would you be prepared to go to them in a crisis? Would you be prepared to listen to them and to seek their advice even when that advice may be contrary to what you believe? Do you trust that God might use your close Christian friends to give you guidance?

3.3 Maybe you want to prayerfully consider who the person or people: friends, colleagues, family, or neighbours who God is calling you to be a 'Naaman maid or servant' to? What is God calling you to do or say this week to this person or people?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293

Matthew Street 10th April 2005