

God is on the Move

by Rev. John C. Cheek



Prayer

Loving God, fountain of every blessing,
Open to us your life-giving word,
and fill us with your Holy Spirit
so that living water may flow out of our hearts—
a spring of hope for our thirsty souls and our thirsty world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1–14 (NIV)

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

¹Now 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.

²Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴Naaman 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. ⁶The 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."

⁷As 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!"

⁸When 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." ⁹So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha 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."

¹¹But 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. ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

¹³Naaman'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'!" ¹⁴So 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.

**The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of God endures forever.**

Sermon on 2 Kings 5:1-14

Introduction

This story takes place in Israel which, at the time of this story, is the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, encloses the Temple city of Jerusalem. The boundary line between the two kingdoms is not too far north of Jerusalem. Jehoram is apparently the king of Judah at the time of this story. That would set it probably sometime in the mid 800's BCE.

This is a story in which leprosy plays a central role. Today, when we say leprosy, we are referring to Hansen's disease, caused by a particular bacterium. At the time of this writing, however, leprosy referred to any of a number of skin diseases. All of these diseases were characterized by discoloration, swelling, and often infectious sores on the body. Often leprosy victims were shunned and isolated. This story shows us that this was a problem for the wealthy and well-connected, as well as everybody else.

One of the elements to watch for in this story is a kind of role reversal. At least twice, someone in a lower social position is the source of help for someone in a higher position. This is a significant thing in a culture where value was associated with one's place in society.

SERMON – God is on the Move

- A. (v. 1) Now Naaman [*the name means "gracious"*] was commander of the army of the king of Aram. [*Aram was a nation that incorporated parts of modern-day Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. It was an absolute enemy of Israel.*] He was a great man in the sight of his master, and
 - 1. (v. 1c) Highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. [*It seems likely that at least some of these victories were over Israel. Clearly God is up to something here.*]
 - 2. (v. 1d) He was a valiant soldier,
 - 3. (v. 1e) But he had leprosy.
- B. (v. 2 & 3) Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive [*kidnapped*] a young girl from Israel, and
 - 1. (v. 2b) She served Naaman's wife.
 - 2. (v. 3) She [*the enslaved girl*] said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."
- C. (v. 4–6) Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said.
 - 1. (v. 5a) "By all means, go," the King of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel."
 - 2. (v. 5b) So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver [*about 730 pounds*], six thousand shekels of gold [*about 146 pounds*] and ten sets of clothing. [*This is an absolute fortune.*]
 - 3. (v. 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." [*Why does the king of Aram send the letter to the king of Israel, rather than to the prophet? We can only guess, but it may be that the Aramean king assumed that anyone with the power to heal leprosy would be a part of the royal household.*]
- D. (v. 7) As soon as the king of Israel read the letter,
 - 1. (v. 7b) He tore his robes [*a sign of grief*]
 - 2. (v. 7c) And he 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?" *[As we'll see in the next verse, this reaction of the king becomes publicly known before very long.]*

- E. (v. 8–10) When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message:
1. (v. 8b) "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."
 2. (v. 9) So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. *[Here we would expect a display of hospitality commensurate with Naaman's position and reputation. But...]*
 3. (v. 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." *[In the Bible, seven is a number which represents perfection or completeness.]*
- F. (v. 11 & 12) 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. *[Naaman expected some drama and some spectacle in keeping with who he was.]* Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, *[these were pristine rivers in his homeland]* better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.
- G. (v. 13 & 14) 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'!" 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.
- H. (v. 15) *[What happened next? Verse 15 begins,]* "Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel."

What can we take away from this passage this morning?

One of the things we see in this passage is that God uses all kinds of people, the great and the lowly, for the work of the Kingdom. In this story we've seen the impact by an enslaved girl and by the servants of Naaman, as well as by the prophet of God, Elisha. Where do you find yourself on this continuum? Are you one of the great and powerful? That's fabulous! Listen to those people who aren't as great or powerful. Are you a lesser person on the continuum? That's also fabulous! Be ready to speak the truth when it needs to be spoken.

A second thing we see in this passage is that we don't always need to expect a spectacle. Naaman felt cheated and shamed when Elisha didn't come out and put on a show of healing his leprosy. God is the God of the spectacular. All we have to do is to watch a sunrise or sunset,

experience a monsoon storm, watch the moon rise over the Rincons, see the miracle of a newborn baby. God does spectacular things. And yet, often when God reaches out to us and holds us and nurtures us, it's in the most ordinary and mundane settings. See the world and all of your interactions through the lens of God's extravagant love, and you'll see miracles in the ordinary every day. And what about how God uses you to express that extravagant love? What do you need to do? And the answer is this: Just be who God made you to be and know that that's enough. You may never know when a kind word, a simple courtesy, might make a world of difference for someone else. So, don't hesitate to be kind.

The third thing we can take from this sermon is perhaps the most important. God is up to something, and God is on the move. God gave Naaman victories, so that when he came to realize that the God of Israel, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, was the only true God, his powerful voice could help to build the kingdom. And I'm not talking about the kingdom of Israel. I'm talking about the kingdom of God.

I can tell you this with certainty: God is on the move in Tucson! God is on the move in your neighborhoods. God is on the move in this church! And what's your role in that movement of God? I encourage you to grab hold of what God is doing and hang on tight. Following God is an adventure, and I don't want you to miss a second of it!

Sisters and brothers, are you ready to let your voice be heard? Are you ready to listen to the wisdom of others? Are you ready to see the miracles that happen every day? Are you ready to be who God has made you and know that you are enough? Are you ready to be a part of what God is up to right now?

May it be so. Amen.

Sermon Art: "*God is on the Move*" by [Impactus/Promise Keepers Canada](#)

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