# Healing of Naaman

Today is a discussion Sunday, so after this introduction, we will split up into small groups of about 6 people at tables and discuss this passage. Remember, this is your opportunity to worship God with your mind and voice, but just don’t monopolize the conversation. There are no designated leaders, so someone just get the ball rolling with one of the questions provided. Or share from your heart if you feel God speaking to you through something you’ve heard this morning. It’s a little less structured service, but we pray that the Holy Spirit will keep order.

Well, last week, Matthew introduced us to Elisha who was Elijah’s successor as a prophet of God. And today, we are reading this story of Naaman’s healing from leprosy. Now, as the story says, Israel was being raided by the Arameans and Naaman is the King of Aram’s top army general and God was helping Naaman to be successful, but he had leprosy. Naaman was at the top of his career and success, except he had this disease that would eventually disfigure and kill him and he knew it. It was sort of like ‘cancer’ to us which strikes people in our day.

Now, it seems that this disease is fairly new since he is married and apparently, this is the main topic of the home. And here is where we meet the young heroine of the story and we don’t even know her name. She’s a young girl who was taken captive during one of the raids on Israel by Aram, but she sees the pain in this family’s life and she knows a cure and she tells her mistress, Naaman’s wife, where to find a cure by the prophet Elisha.

Now, if I were her, I might have acted differently. Maybe, I would have been a little angry or secretly revengeful. Remember, she had been torn from her family and life in Israel and was made a servant. I might have said, ‘Dirty Aramean. Serves him right!’ and just kept my mouth shut.

But she doesn’t do that. She knows of Elisha and the God of Israel and the miracles that he has done and she believes. Now, there is nothing to indicate in the Bible that Elisha had healed anyone of leprosy before or even after Naaman. So, she was going out on a limb by saying something here. I mean, if Naaman, actually goes to Israel in the heart of the enemy and risks his life in doing so. If Naaman does NOT get healed, think about the consequences for this servant girl. This is a bold move to say something and she is putting her life on the line.

But she sees the pain in her mistress’ eyes and it is her love and her faith that drives her to say, ‘Go to the prophet and he will cure him of his leprosy’. Her faithfulness sets the story in motion.

So, Naaman first gets permission to go visit the enemy and he even gets a letter by the King of Aram. Naaman also takes of small fortune with him. We were talking last week in our discipleship group about how you don’t realize how much a blessing your health is until it is taken from you. And people will spend any amount of money to find healing and extend their life. And Naaman is no exception.

So, Naaman shows up to the King of Israel with a letter that says please heal Naaman of leprosy. Now, in all other countries, the King tells the prophets what to do and say, but that’s not how it worked in Israel because they were true prophets of the true God. The King had no control over the prophets, but the King of Aram and Naaman didn’t understand that. So, you understand the King of Israel’s reaction to the letter, ‘I am in big trouble because I can’t cure anything. Only God can do that.’

When Elisha hears, he tells the King to send Naaman to him. And when Naaman and his whole entourage shows up, Elisha doesn’t even go to the door, he just sends a messenger to Naaman telling him to wash in the Jordan seven times. Now, that doesn’t sound too bad, but in Eastern culture, it was the rudest thing you could do. When someone important comes to your home, you send the most important person in the home to greet him.

So, Naaman was offended and on top of that, Elisha’s message made no sense. It wasn’t at all what Naaman had expected. He already had imagined what would happen and when it didn’t happen the way he thought, he was disappointed and a little upset. Plus, the request didn’t make any human sense. The Jordan River was nothing special and not nearly as clean as the rivers in his homeland.

Everything about this encounter really made him really angry. The rudeness of Elisha, doesn’t he know who I am. His preconceived expectations of how God would cure him and the non-sensible aspect of the command to bath in a dirty little river.

But luckily, Naaman had some wise servants who told him, if you were told to do some great thing, would you have done it, so why not do this little thing and see if it works.

And we see God working to heal not only on Naaman’s physical blemish, but He is going to clean Naaman’s heart of pride. C.S.Lewis said this about pride.

*There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else' and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves.*

*There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others… it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.*

You can discuss this more in your tables.

So, the proud Naaman with his whole entourage goes down to the river and he has to take off his army uniform with all his medals. He has to get naked in front of everyone and remind himself that he is only a man like everyone else. He has to reveal his leprosy to the world. And he baths and dips in the water. Once, again, twice, three times, 4, 5, 6, and finally as he comes up out of the water on the seventh time, the leprosy is gone and not only that. His skin is clean like that of a young boy. It’s not only healed its better than new. All the signs of years of battle and exposure are gone. He exposed his brokenness and God made it brand new.

So, Naaman goes back to Elisha and this time he gets an audience with him.

*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. So please accept a gift from your servant.”*

*The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.*

So, Naaman now knows the God of Israel, but God wants Naaman to know that He doesn’t work like all the other gods that he has worshiped where you have to buy your god. So, Elisha will not accept any gifts even though he had like equivalent of 2.5 million Euros or 25 MSEK with him.

I wonder today, how many pastors today would have not accepted something in this situation. I wonder about myself. Even if Matthew and I do not receive any money from the church. I mean this guy has a ton of money; what would it hurt to take just a little from him. I could think of a few things I could use. But God tells Elisha no and that’s enough for Elisha. He refuses.

Now, I wish the story ended there, but it doesn’t because Elisha has a servant that is always with him named Gehazi. And he rationalizes in his mind that Naaman has so much, what would it hurt to take just a little. So, he rides after Naaman and lies to him and says that just after he left, some young prophets just happened to show up and they need a few things: clothes and a talent of silver which was around 34 kilograms. Naaman gives him double that and Gehazi rides back.

When he enters the house, Elisha says, where have you been? And Gehazi says nowhere in particular. Now parents, when you ask your kids where they have been and they say, nowhere in particular, you better find out where they were in general because you know they are up to no good.

Well, God has shown Elisha everything that Gehazi did and then he pronounces the judgment, the leprosy that was healed on Naaman would now be on Gehazi and it happened just as Elisha said as soon as he left his presence.

Even though Gehazi saw all these miracles performed by Elisha, it wasn’t enough. He played the game of serving God, but he didn’t give it his whole heart. So, when this opportunity to get wealth presented itself, he turned his heart to the money. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, ‘You cannot serve both God and money.’ It is very tempting in our day and age to serve our desire for wealth because there is some security in that or so we think. You can discuss this also.

One last point, Naaman understands that he has met the one and only true God and that demands his total devotion, so he says, I will never again make burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. And he is so concerned because it his responsibility to help the King of Aram to bow down to another God, so he asked permission to perform his duty and Elisha permits this.

Now, contrast Naaman’s concern for the details here in making sure God would not think that he is worshiping any other god to the current status in the nation of Israel at that time where the Israelites were openly worshiping other gods. This was the main reason why God was giving them into the hands of Naaman when they were in battle. Here’s the man God is using to judge the people for their idol worship and He, the enemy of Israel, is more concerned about proper worship of the Lord than they are. How ironic.

Being in the right church is not enough. It is your heart that matters to God and He will have no other ‘gods’ or ‘idols’ before Him. So, if you are here and your heart is split with any other thing: like wealth or power or pride or sex or alcohol or drugs or whatever. You need to repent and put those things away and only worship God alone. He is the only one worthy of our worship.

2 Kings 5:1-14

**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 of raiders 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 all 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.

# Healing of Naaman Questions

1. What did you learn from the faithfulness of the young Israelite servant girl?
2. Discuss the sin of pride from the quotations by C.S.Lewis (see back side). Do you think his description is accurate? Why or why not.
3. Naaman struggles at first to follow Elisha’s simple commands. Discuss this statement: Many people will go God’s way as long as God goes their way.
4. Gehazi struggles in this story with hypocrisy. Discuss his sin.
5. Are there any other lessons you took away from this story?

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# C.S. Lewis Quoations

# “There is one vice (pride) of which no man in the world is free; which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves.

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