

2 Kings 5:1-6:7 – Go and Tell John: The Lepers are Cleansed

Opening Illustration: The pastor in the church I grew up in (FBC Dallas) tells the story – one Sunday a young woman maybe teens or early twenties came down saying she wanted to take Christ as savior! He says that as the song kept going she began to weep! And so he went and sat by her and asked her what she was crying for? **Her response:** *She took the card that she had filled out, and she said, "You see my name?" "Yes." "You see that 'Mrs.' in front of my name?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I'm no 'Mrs.' I've never been married. I write 'Mrs.' In front of my name on account of my little baby boy. When he was born, I said in my heart, 'I'm going to raise him in that wonderful First Baptist Church in Dallas. So I began bringing him into the nursery, and I began attending the services, and I've been listening to you preach, and today I felt I wanted to give my heart to Jesus and be a member of the congregation." "But," she said, "since I have come and since I've been seated here, I've been thinking about me and my life, a prostitute. I've been thinking about me and what I've done, and if you knew me, and these people knew me, you would not want the likes of me in this church."*

Today's text is about something similar – a truth that deep down all of us could confess we are like this young woman, **we have a fundamental problem, we are unclean – we are all lepers of one kind or another – Romans 3:10-18:** *“None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” 13 “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” 14 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known.” 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

Main Point: *The glorious message today is that God can overcome the effects of the Fall (whether it's Skin disease, frustrated Work, or sin) and deliver us from slavery to curse by bringing us through the waters of the Jordan safely into the Promised Land!*

(Read 1-7) But we are Lepers – There is a fundamental problem with the human race

- **Here is a man who looks like he's got it going on, very successful in the eyes of the world, has everything** – a great man, high favor (Lord gives him victories – demonstrating again that God is not just God of Israel but all nations) mighty man, a valorous man
- **However, the end of the sentence lands with a Thud – but he was a leper**

He had some deteriorating disease that affected the skin! And this would have been shocking, he now has a disease that outcasts and beggars have

- **Essentially here is a man who is living the American dream who has power, money, prestige** – but he has cancer – he has a problem that he cannot fix himself!
- **Leprosy would be the ultimate outsiders disease** – Lepers were to be put outside the camp because they were unclean – and that is a picture of us with God, we are to be outside because we aren't clean! *(not getting picked for kick ball now!)*
- **His physical condition is a picture of our spiritual one** – we are not what we are meant to be – *instead we are filthy and dying – and sin is ugly it ruins lives, marriages, friendship, etc*
- **And here the Bible acts as a good doctor identifying for us our sickness! And that is sin/A SPOT!** And this is true of all of us – a picture of our spiritual condition – on the inside we are dying and this story is seeking to help us understand that we have a massive problem just as did Naaman!

But God has a prophet to fix the problem – Now we see the hero of the story, a little slave girl – you have this tragic scene a little Israelite girl taken off as a slave after a military raid! *(Imagine if Saddam had taken one of our children captive)*

- **Imagine this, she had been torn away from mother and Father** (apparently who were godly people teaching her the ways of the Lord) into enemy land... and in the midst of this tragedy **she becomes an evangelist!** *She knows of Elisha and knows that God is with him.*

- **She realizes what even the King of Israel won't, that there is a prophet in Israel** – she believes in Yahweh and is carrying out the mission given to the Israelites to be **a light to the nation** – she knows that God's power is with her people
- **And she is doing this by being an amazing display of loving enemy and blessing those who persecute you!** **Romans 12:14:** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them*

This is a shocking story – the Israelites would have been reading this when they were in a similar situation to the little girl – **slaves in exile...** and in the midst of that they will read about a pagan man being blessed but they will also see how they are to conduct themselves while in captivity – as this slave girl did!

- **They are called to be about the great commission given to Abraham in Genesis 12** – being a blessing to the nations
- **This little girl understands the Torah better than the King does, and she is living out being a light in the darkness...** and although the decline of Israel is apparent in the face of a little girl we see a Remnant!
- **They hear in exile that they are to be for the good of the people around them...** even when they persecute you **Jeremiah 29:7:** *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare* –

Application: May we be like this little girl, even in the face of persecution or distress – This is a picture of our evangelism... **we point them to the Word and the prophet and we seek the good of those around us (even our enemies)!** – *People are often brought into the kingdom of God at great cost to other people.*

Now Naaman listens to the voice of this Hebrew slave girl and tells the King about Israel's God

- However, this is a strange turn of events... **Naaman goes to the King of Israel and not the prophet,** the one she had mentioned!
- **Naaman probably has several misconceptions:** 1) that the prophet would be subject to the King and 2) that his services can be bought
- **Did the little girl say anything about the King or money? No** – but he has preconceived notions of how to be healed and *yet he has come to the one country where the Prophet is not subject to the King!*

Sadly, the King of Israel does not have the faith the little girl has – **he does not recognize that there is a prophet in Israel or the power of God in the midst of Israel** – he takes this request as a possible way to stir up trouble “*picking a fight*” The HCSB says.

- **The King does get at least one thing right, only God could do this** – *but his response is troubling in that he doesn't even consider Elisha*
- **In this story Elisha will take the initiative** – whereas the King should be seeking God for the people, he is cowering under this request
- **But we see something true do we not?** Neither King could help Naaman with his biggest problem and ultimately **government and education don't fix our deepest problems** – **we need a prophet!**

(Read 8-19a) There is a Cure!

Elisha takes a shot at the King saying why have you tore your clothes? He chides the King for not realizing that this request was possible

- **The point is that they will know there is a prophet, which is connected to Naaman's later confession** – Elisha too carries out the missionary mandate!

Naaman comes to him like a fighter at MMA event with an entourage – But Elisha doesn't treat him as something special, in fact won't even come out to him but sends a messenger

- **Why did he do this?** Probably to deconstruct Naaman's thoughts about miracle workers – he was no soothsayer with a magic trick and money, power, nor him **rolling up with a Posse** would buy him healing! **This was to be a free gift!**

Elisha tells him to was in the Jordan 7 times – the instructions are such that it will be realized that the God of Israel has done this but only when His word is submitted to – **he was to wash in the muddy waters of the Jordan to show that there was no natural connection here**

- **This is also a picture of the Exodus one has to cross through the Jordan to arrive at the promise land** – the significance of the Jordan in both chapters cannot be missed!

Naaman doesn't like the instructions of the cure and possibly how he's been treated – *and he's angry and goes away in a rage (v. 12)*

- **First, he's offended/insulted that Elisha doesn't come out to him, he says surely he would have "come out to me."** – *probably thinking who does this guy think he is?* Elisha refuses to treat him as dignity, but treats him **as a leper!**
- **He believes Elisha would just come out and wave a magic wand over the spot and that be it... but again this is no magic trick, this involves humble submission – Davis Quote:** *Naaman's complaints are the very objections many people make to the gospel. Naaman (and perhaps you?) didn't like the humiliation of the gospel (vv. 9–11a), nor the simplicity of the gospel (vv. 10, 11b; 'wash and be clean'), nor the narrowness of the gospel (v. 12). It was too much for a man who thought he was somebody.*

We do not get to put stipulations on our salvation – we just have to humble ourselves and believe

- **Naaman would like to change the stipulations, he doesn't like the cure** – *he possibly sees the Israelites as unclean* – **but its Ironic a man with nasty skin worried about which waterway he gets in** – he believes the waters in Syria are better – but out of Palestine comes the cure!
 - o **Illustration:** are we like this? **We don't like the cure offered us?** It's like going to the doctor for heart issues and him saying lay off the Twinkies... *and you think he cant really mean that!*
 - o **Essentially that is what Naaman is saying...** you mean go wash in the Public Pool? Do you know what kids do in there? I'm better than that!

This is a picture of human kind, we want remedy on our own terms – we want to secure our own healing, or buy it, but not submit

- **His servants talk him off the ledge** – they basically say to him, if he had told you to do something crazy you would have done it (maybe even bring more money)
- **All he needed to do to be clean was humble himself, submit to the Word of the Prophet and be cleaned** – these are glorious words today to us – ***we though vile and dirty can be clean!* GLORIOUS!**
- **God offers free grace but it's only for those that will humbly fall before him in trust and reliance, who will look to him in weakness and not strength!** You see there is no partiality with him, he doesn't care if you have money! Or Power! Or Prestige!

Naaman now has a change and he simply accepts the Word, humbles himself, and washed in the Jordan River and comes out clean on the other side! Restored like a Child! This is a picture of being returned to Eden (imagine that day ladies, no more ponds!)

- **This is a new birth** – Naaman has received extravagant grace

Here we see Baptism – in NT many OT events are pictured as baptisms (1 Peter the flood and 1 Corinthians 10 coming through the Red Sea) and here may be the richest picture!

- **In the OT the waters are picture as the death and judgment of God (see Jonah)** – here we see Naaman going through a death to new life, coming out on the other side Regenerated! – This is why we immerse!

- **Physical sign of the spiritual reality** – Leviticus 13 would have said needs to be outside the camp, separated from God, but now goes through the judgment of the Jordan and comes out to new life in the Promise Land.

And imagine how scandalous this is – especially to the Jews in exile hearing this – God has healed a Gentile General! This would be like Tony healing Kim Jong Il tomorrow!

- **Elisha too is acting like the young girl, loving enemy and neighbor** – Luke 6:27-28, 35-36: “*But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you...35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*”

Question: Do we see Muslims like this? *Would we have wanted Bin Laden to come to faith in Christ?*

- **But also a sign to those in this room that feel as though God would never want you (that young prostitute) – this story is shouting to you, God cares for the outsider! GLORIOUS!**

How do we know he is changed? How do we know someone is saved?

- 1) **His confession** – He gets what the Kings of Israel do not, there is only one God and it is Yahweh! *This is an astonishing statement from a non-Jew*
- 2) **His actions** – No longer arrogant but calls himself *five times Elisha’s servant*, he wants Israelite dirt (he is not going to hide his commitment to Yahweh), he will go back to Syria worshipping Israel’s God!

Naaman seeks show gratitude to Elisha with a gift – but Elisha will not take it, this is a free gift from Elisha (this is not a TV healing ministry begging for money) – **This was GRACE – unmerited favor, a free gift, it cannot be earned!** And Elisha does not even want to give the appearance of that

V. 18 seems quite strange on the face of it – it seems unclear if he is saying it is ok to go into the temple of Rimmon or if he is just leaving it up to Naaman’s conscience!

- **This could be like Paul making concessions in Romans 14 for the weaker brother** – either way he allows for him to continue to operate as a right hand man to the King! To which Matt Sigmon shows up and says “*go in peace!*”

Several Lessons to be learned here:

- 1) **Another sign of his conversion is his sensitive conscience** – this being played out in front of Israelites who are not exclusive in their worship! *He wants to live out his faith with integrity and wants to be wholly committed Yahweh*
- 2) **We aren’t to remove yourself from society once come to God (bomb shelter – in the World but not OF!)** but instead work in your spheres and don’t violate conscience – we see here that he is not embarrassed of Yahweh – *we are not called to live this out in private, but in public* and to serve for the good of those around us! **So use your job, hobbies, and likes strategically for the Mission of God!**

Application:

- **Always be prepared like this little girl to give a reason for the hope that is within you!** Even if its an enemy – (*For the joy of the Nations: Elisha, this servant girl, Daniel later, Rad Shad and Benny*) – we see something here of how one comes to faith (through humble servants who point to the prophet)
- **Unbeliever** – you should notice several things here too – **everything may be going great but sooner or later a spot shows up... and good works, coming to church, having family that are Christians, success, money, power, none of it can cure the spot...**
- **Question:** What did Naaman bring to the Jordan? **His condition not his gold! Admit problem!**

(READ 19b-27) Grace is Free – GO FAST!!!

Now tragically Gehazi tramples over grace... he wants riches for his work, he wants the gentile to pay (basically in New English bible it says you let him go scot-free)

- **He lies to obtain this wealth (verse 22, 25)**– this is so heinous because it **obscures the work of Grace and the teaching that it is FREE** – “prophets” in other cultures around Israel did work for money, not so with Elisha
- **The Punishment is so harsh because he is preaching an anti-gospel, he is undoing what God has done – His lie about two sons of prophets undoes all that Elisha was teaching in his gracious act** – this is why his punishment is severe – **he was implying that grace wasn’t free, it had to be bought** – *Yahweh is a gracious gift giver, he is not one to be bribed or cajoled*

It is ok for ministers to accept gifts, but Elisha says now was not the time! *He does not want to muddy the idea that salvation is by grace alone!*

- *And now he will take on the skin disease to represent his wicked heart because he values money over integrity!* **The punishment and judgment now falls on a minister who wouldn’t fit the qualifications, he was greedy for dishonest gain – breaking the 9th and 10th commandments** – this will mean that he will be separated from God and not longer serve Elisha.
- **And we see the decline of the nation – an honest Gentile and a Lying, Greedy Israelite!** He as opposed to the slave girl wanted to exploit Naaman not serve him! ***We cannot serve both God and money!***

Lessons Learned:

- **Nothing escapes the eye of God** – when he comes back Elisha knows what he has done...
- **And this is a warning to those of us in here that are “churchy people”** – being close to the gospel and the church doesn’t mean squat! *Being around the Word doesn’t guarantee righteousness or fruitfulness*
 - o **Children in particular get that in here** – it doesn’t matter that your parents are believers, or that you are around the church – you may think you are fine, *but you could just be a hanger on like Gehazi*
- **In the gospel, Grace is Free** – we don’t add to the work of Christ (Galatians 1 – Anathema!)
- **Unbeliever you cannot pay for this Grace** – **if you are here as an unbeliever we don’t want to muddy this truth** – *we do not want your money; we want you to be like Naaman receive this free gift!*

(6:1-7) Don’t Go Back to Slavery!

Now Elisha goes Yoda pulling the X-wing out of the Swamp in Empire!

- The accommodations were small for the sons of the prophet so they want to **get Michael Britt and the boys to go build a bigger log cabin to live in (Revolution – Michael!)**
 - o **Illustration:** duplex with four teenage sons playing football in a hallway – so we built a house – may have been the success of Elisha that led to growth among the sons of the prophets!

We have a situation where Genesis 3 is playing out, our work is frustrated because of the fall and because of this an Ax head goes in the water – this miracle will again be a reversal of the curse!

- **In Eden before the fall the creation would join us in our work and one day it will again...** we get a glimpse of that here!

The axe head would have been quite expensive in that time and having lost it as a borrower he would have had to face the prospect of becoming a bondservant to pay the debt!

- **This would be akin to me totaling Sigmon’s Cooper and not having insurance!**

So Elisha goes Yoda to care for a friend and brother (we don't just care for the enemy, we care for the brother)

We learn four important things from this strange story:

- 1) Those who cry to the Lord are protected ultimately** – he provides for his faithful ones
- 2) He is involved in the every day particularities of our lives not just in the course of national events** – *he clothes flowers, feeds sparrows, and makes Axe Heads float* – He is a good father to His children! – In the middle of all these amazing stories is one about an axe head – *the intricacies of the Torah point to the fact that God cares about the nooks and crannies of every day life*
- 3) God rule rules over the laws of nature**
- 4) God doesn't want us to return to Slavery** – **Elisha is acting as a kinsman redeemer keeping his brother out of slavery** – God did not want them back in slavery (and we aren't to either Galatians 4 – *throw off now sin that so easily entangles, live as a freed man!*)

Elisha here is a prophet pronouncing *good news to the poor and freedom to the captives* – As a Kinsman who forgives and solves debts!

And again at the Jordan someone is given their life back – the language here is almost identical to what Elisha says to the Shunammite woman after raised her son from the dead – **pick up!**

- **Again we have a picture of Baptism...here in the same place Naaman received life so does a prophet** – in Baptism is a sign that we are buried under the waters in death and judgment (*which is why in Baptism we are dependent on someone else pulling us out of the water*), and coming back out on the other side with Life!
- **We died buried and then raised in our baptism - pointing to ultimate life**

We are like this son of the prophet! We are like Naaman – *we have a sickness we cannot heal and we have a debt we cannot pay*

Christocentric – What can save us? Well we have to come to another Prophet!

- **There will be another suffering servant, like this little girl...** who will lose father and be among enemies who persecute him and sin against him, and he will bless those who persecute him and lead them to healing!
- **There will be another prophet who cleanses lepers!**
- **In fact John the Baptist will wonder if he is the greater prophet** – and this prophet will say *“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them”* – I am the one you are looking for!

There will be another prophet who shows mercy to Gentile Commanders – as he will heal a Roman Centurions servant

- **There would be another prophet who had command over water, who can float on top of it** – *and he too like Elisha takes care of debts and leads out of slavery* – That's the good news of the gospel, he is a redeeming prophet who settles our debts!
- **Elisha is not the last prophet who proclaims good news to the poor and liberty to the captives!**

But this prophet Jesus is Better than Elisha because he doesn't just heal of Leprosy, but instead takes the plight of the Leper on himself and goes outside the camp – Jesus as the greater Suffering Servant doesn't just cure us but enters into our problem and takes them on himself!

- **And he becomes a leper, taking our spots and sicknesses and diseases and is excluded from the presence of God and outside the Camp so that we lepers could be brought it:** *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.*

- **Imagine the power of this savior, he is a doctor who doesn't just cut out your tumor but takes your tumor on his own body! ...and dies and comes out clean on the other side! SUBSTITUTION!!!**

This King can wash you today, he can baptize you and make you clean and give New life!

Conclusion:

- **So Unbeliever here is the greatest message in the World – there is cleansing for prostitutes, thieves, liars, and the self-righteous – just fall on your knees and ask for mercy and he will plunge you through water!**
 - o **It doesn't matter what you have done – right now we are just little servant messengers telling you there is a Prophet in Israel and we are answering the question for you: *what can wash away your sins? Your uncleanness? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!***
- **Believer there is a lot to respond to but fundamentally I want us to be like this servant girl – we are here for the good of the nations! Lets Point to Him in our work, neighborhoods and the nations!**

And as we go we are called to administer this sign of the Kingdom Baptism because it is a radical act – a proclamation that Caesar is not Lord. Jesus is! TRANSFERRED FROM ONE KINGDOM TO ANOTHER!

And so as one friend said: *When we go and dip a woman in [Haiti](#) fleeing from Santeria, and when we plunge beneath the waters a man in [China](#) fleeing from Darwinism and when we plunge an 10 year old [boy in Chapel Hill](#) fleeing from a Southern Baptist Self Righteousness we aren't just putting forward a right of passage, we are enraging the powers and the kingdoms of this world saying to them the wrath of God, the waters of God are going to overtake you, but this one is outside of your domain because he through faith is in Christ, he through faith has already been through the flood of judgment, he has already been through the waters of Jordan and in Christ he is already seated in the promise Land!*

That's what we are saying in Baptism to prostitutes and preacher's sons – we say what my former pastor said to that Prostitute – *there is a place where we can be washed white as snow –*

For you see: There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilt and stains:

LS – Rev. 7:9-17

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