

The Leprosy Mission - Letting the Light In Devotionals

**Week 4 – Humbled by our Father’s Power**

2 Kings 5:1-14

When my younger sister and I were children, our toys would sometimes get broken. Fortunately, our dad seemed to have an endless supply of superglue and would always repair the toys. One day we were playing in the garden and my sister trod on an empty snail shell. She said straight away “Don’t worry, Daddy will mend it!” She hadn’t understood that repairing a snail shell was not at the top of Daddy’s to-do list. There is beauty in my sister’s total confidence that Daddy could fix anything. She trusted completely that however bad the damage was, our father could repair it.

In our passage today from 2 Kings Chapter 5, we read of a young girl who displays remarkable trust. Naaman is the commander of the king of Aram’s army at an uneasy time of peace between Israel and Syria. He is “a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded…a valiant soldier” (5:1). “But he had leprosy” (5:1). A young girl had been taken captive from Israel and was now a servant of Naaman’s wife, but she seeks to help. She says to Naaman’s wife “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy” (5:3). The girl is talking about Elisha, the main prophet in Israel at that time. In the previous chapters, Elisha has made bad water drinkable (2:19-22), provided oil so that a widow can pay her debts (4:1-7) and raised a young man to life (4:18-37). The young girl has heard of Elisha’s reputation and knows he can cure Namaan of his leprosy.

Namaan is sent to the king of Israel, with a letter that says, “I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.” (5:6) At this, Israel’s king panics. He tears his clothes, a sign of deep distress and sorrow. He says “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?” (5:7) The king feels powerless to cure Namaan of leprosy because he knows it’s impossible. He forgets that he knows a man who wields God’s power to do the impossible.

Elisha hears and says, “Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” (5:8) Naaman comes to the entrance to Elisha’s house, where Elisha’s messenger tells him, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored and you shall become clean” (5:10). Naaman is furious for two reasons. Firstly, Elisha hasn’t come out to meet him personally. He had expected Elisha to wave his hand over the leprosy and cure it (5:11). Secondly, he doesn’t see why he has to wash in the Jordan when the rivers closer to home are cleaner (5:12). He might have thought that washing in the river would only provide ritual cleansing, not a cure for his leprosy, and he could have been ritually cleansed at home. He turns away, enraged. His pride nearly gets in the way of him being cured! But his servants come to the rescue. They persuade him that if Elisha had commanded him to do something difficult, he would have done it, so why not do something as easy as washing? (5:13)

Namaan follows Elisha’s instructions and he is cured. His flesh becomes like that of “a little boy” (5:14). The writer is most likely playing on the idea that a “little girl” (5:2) had the solution to the great man’s problem and now Namaan has become like a “little boy” (5:14). The girl knew that Elisha had God’s power, but Namaan did not like Elisha’s unorthodox methods. He had to lay down his pride and obey God’s command, accepting that Elisha had God’s authority to cure him in whatever way God chose. As a result of being cured, Namaan says, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.” (5:15) He has faced a humbling situation and through it, he has understood much more of who God is. He has realised that he has been cured by the one true God, the LORD. To reach that truth, he needed to listen to the wisdom of a child.

I am humbled when I read of how children overcome the challenges of their leprosy. Kavinas is 11 years old and he lives in Sri Lanka. His leprosy was diagnosed late, so he has patches all over his body. His school stopped him from attending because of his leprosy. With support from The Leprosy Mission and a public health inspector, he was allowed to return to school, but the headmaster left in response. Other children used to avoid Kavinas; they didn’t play with him because of his leprosy. Now, thanks to awareness raising at his school, he no longer faces problems there because the other children understand that they don’t need to be afraid of his leprosy. He can enjoy his childhood, receive an education and take exams to give him a future.

The last two weeks have been extremely humbling because we have felt powerless in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has become clear that we are not nearly so in control of our own lives as we might like to assume. Perhaps some of us like to find our identity in our busyness and being unable to be busy outside the home has brought us low. Just as Naaman had to lay down his pride to listen to God’s voice, I pray that we would be able to do the same. Jesus, the Word made flesh, had the authority of his Father over sickness in a greater way than Elisha yet he humbled himself even to death on a cross for us.

Jesus told his followers, “become like a child” (Matthew 18:3). May we have the same confidence in God’s good, sovereign rule over his world today as the little girl had in God’s power to bring healing. At a time when we feel powerless, may we lean into God with complete child-like trust and dependence, knowing that he is both our almighty King and our wonderful Father.

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.****7****Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7)*

*Written by Chris Stratta*

**2 Kings 5:1-15**

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.

**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.”

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