



Elijah & Elisha #8 **Naaman & Gahazi**

Mark Crawford
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We are in a series about Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha. The OT is a story of God's people and his covenant with them. The New Testament is the story of Jesus, his coming, his life, his death, his resurrection, and the church.

II Kings is the story of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah: everything is chronological but the stories interweave a bit which can make it a little confusing. Elijah and Elisha interacted mostly with the kings of Israel. We are now focused on Elisha. Last week, we talked about how we know when to call for help, in this case the prophet.

Luke 4:14-27

Let's begin with a story about Jesus after being tempted at the beginning of his ministry. He's in the synagogue and they bring him a part of the book of Isaiah:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The people then realized Jesus was someone they knew: he was the carpenter's son. How can this man be the Messiah? How will he establish the throne of David forever? Jesus knows what they were thinking:

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.²³ Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

Jesus goes onto to tell them a story about Elijah:

²⁴ “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy¹ in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.

Then the people get angry and try to kill Jesus for calling himself the Messiah.

Naaman and Gehazi

2 Kings 5



Let’s take a closer look at this story about Elisha and Naaman and Gehazi, starting with a map so we know where we are. Look for the Aram kingdom in the north which had been in battle with Israel. Judah sometimes fought against them as well. Notice the water from Damascus flows down through to the sea of Galilee and through Israel.

Namaan was the king’s right-hand man in Aram. The trouble is that Namaan had leprosy. One day the Hebrew slave of the king’s wife told them, “If only Naaman could meet Elisha the prophet in Samaria.” Notice the faith of children!

So Aram went to the king of Aram to ask permission to leave and seek the prophet: he needed healing. He carried a letter that asked the prophet to heal him.

This is a political conundrum: Namaan, who has killed Israelites, now wants to be healed? If he sends him away, this will anger the King of Aram. but if he heals him, he is healing the one who wants to kill his people.

Elisha hears about this distress and asks for them to be sent to him.

Namaan brings with him a lot of wealth to give Elisha for healing him, including 10 sets of clothing and 10 talents of silver and 600 shekels of gold. A silver talent is at least 75 pounds! So he brought 750 pounds! 600 shekels is 150 pounds of gold. This was huge! Naaman is desperate and is coming with a king's ransom to seek healing from leprosy.

He comes to the door of Elisha and Elisha sends his messenger who tells him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River. **Think about this:** you have a disease and you go to the prophet with a king's ransom expecting a miracle and are instead told to take a bath. Naaman is upset! At least he expected to see Elisha, not just a messenger. He has already tried taking a bath in the Jordan River which is dirty.

If Elijah had asked him to do something spectacular like killing a bear, he would do it. But this was too simple.

However, Naaman goes to the Jordan and he is completely healed with his skin like a little child. Then he goes back to Elisha and wants to pay him. He has a complete heart transformation: he begs Elisha to take something and Elisha refuses because it's not about Elijah, it's about God. Naaman then asks to take dirt so he can worship the God of Israel when he returns. He knows that he will have to visit the pagan temple with the king and even so, Elisha tells him to go in peace.

Naaman

2 Kings 5:1-19

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.^[a]

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^[b] of silver, six thousand shekels^[c] 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. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. ¹⁸ But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.”

¹⁹ “Go in peace,” Elisha said.

Decades later, Aram is wiped out but for this moment of time, Yahweh's name is great. You would not expect Namaan to receive this healing: the commander of your enemy's army. Who is that person in my life?

Who do you have no hope for? Maybe it's someone close to you or someone you work with?

What are the simple things God is asking you to do? We want the big miraculous amazing things, yet God says, "Go take a bath." We pray but is that enough? Is it enough to come here on Sunday and sing and eat together? There has to be more! But what are the simple mundane things that you don't even notice or look at.

I'd like to end here but the story doesn't end here.

Gehazi

2 Kings 5:20-27

Gahazi is the servant of Elisha, someone you would expect to follow God and have a heart for what God is doing. Elisha was Elijah's servant, Gahazi was Elisha's servant. He sees Namaan leave with all his treasures and he says Elisha was too easy on this man and so make a plan to **take** something from him. So, he chases him down and asks for a portion of the treasure but Namaan offers him even more.

When Gahazi comes back, Elisha asks him where he went and he responds "no where."

Who is your enemy and what do they deserve?

What does it mean to love your enemy?

Elisha tells Gahazi that leprosy would cling to him forever. He was the prophet's servant and yet he sat at the table of folly instead of the table of wisdom.

Prior to this, Gahazi had gone to the King of Israel to read him the stories of Elijah. Even though he knew all the things that happened, it makes me think about his heart which still wanted more.

Who is your enemy and what do they deserve?

Jesus in Matthew 5 tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Israel didn't show love to the foreigner: you hear this in Gahazi. What does it mean to love and pray for those who persecute you? Ponder these people who seem far from God or far from us: what does it mean to love these people and pray for them?

Today is Pentecost which is 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. We find ourselves wanting the big grand thing!

Simple Things

Pentecost

Acts 1:14 – They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Acts 2:1 – When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Acts 2:43-44 – They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

After Jesus was resurrected, notice the things the disciples actually did: prayer, gathering together, reading Scripture, breaking bread...the simple ways to orient towards God. God will move from these simple practices.

This week:

- Read a Gospel chapter each day, maybe from the Gospel of Luke.
- Pray or just sit quietly and listen.
- Find one family you can do something with this week. "Go take a bath!"