

24-0929p Transcript

24-0929p - *There is a Prophet in Israel*

Bible Readers: John Nousek and Roger Raines

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The Story of Naaman's Faith, Part 2

Scripture Readings

Scripture Reader: Mike Mathis

The scripture reading for this evening will be from Galatians 5 verses 16 through 21, which reads, I say then walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh for the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one another so that you do not do the things that you wish but if you are led by the spirit you are not under the law now the works of the flesh are evident which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, tensions, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like of which I tell you beforehand just as I also told you in time past that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That completes the reading.

Sermons

Preacher: Jim Lokenbauer

Good, you came back.

I'm going to conclude our story of is there a prophet of Israel, the story of Naaman's faith and if you notice the reading that Mike gave that the gentleman did this morning involves idolatry and towards the end of this evening's lesson that will be tied in here the more I read about the story of Naaman found in 2nd Kings 5 the more I appreciate the great value it has for everyone who reads it. I'm sure that's why the Holy Spirit made Jeremiah tell this story. Jeremiah is the prophet who wrote it.

The story applies to everybody, people from his time and all the people of our age, to people inside the church and people outside the church. Naaman to me represents people outside the church who have not yet come to know the message of the true and living God of heaven. We will later examine Gehazi who represents those who are already in the fold of God.

This morning we left off with Naaman being told by the little Israeli girl that there was a prophet in Samaria who could heal his leprosy. He had most likely heard some of the great deeds and wonders

God had performed to protect his people Israel. If you recall in Numbers, Balak, the king of Media I believe it is, contracting Balaam to curse Israel as they were coming up out of Egypt.

They had heard the stories of their great God who was with them and what he had done for them and all the plagues on Egypt. So word of mouth spread fast coming up out of Egypt. So most likely the Syrians heard it as well.

The Syrian king had high regard for Naaman and so he wrote to the king of Israel on his behalf asking him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. So Naaman leaves for Samaria loaded with gifts of silver, gold, and clothing and all of these were going to be to grease the skids for the prophet. They felt that you know they needed to pay him off to sweeten the deal.

First stop go to the king of Israel and show him the official letter of recommendation. When bad king Jehoram who was the son of Ahab, the worst king of Israel, read the letter he tore his robes which was an act of great distress, very theatrical, and said, am I a God? Can I kill and bring back the life? He regarded this as an impossible task and saw the letter as a red herring or a moose, a trick to get Israel into a fight with Syria. And if he were a king who had faith in the God of Israel, he was busy bowing to Baal by the way, his first action would then to pray to his God and then to consult his faithful prophet Elisha to intercede on Israel's behalf.

But he is evil and he did not. Enter Elisha into the story. Elisha was God's personal pick to succeed Elijah.

We see that in 1 Kings 19. He is told by the Holy Spirit of the king's distress and sent the message to him saying, why have you torn your robes? Send the man to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel. Elisha basically rebuked the king, why the lack of faith? Did you forget about me? Did you forget about God? You should have known there's a prophet in Israel.

So Naaman, full of hope and great expectation along with his entourage, traveled to Elisha's little home and stands at the door. Gehazi, the servant, answers the door and tells him, go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed. The door closes.

For Naaman, he makes his great journey from Syria, hundreds of miles by caravan with his people. He visits the king of Israel, travels to the prophet's house, only to be told by the servant as to what he perceives as, go take a bath in the river. Here we learn a little bit more about Naaman.

He has a short fuse, a short temper. He expected more pomp and circumstance, a little more showmanship, a little more bang for the buck he was going to grease the prophet's palm with. After all, prophets where he came from would put on quite a show.

And if you recall the battle of gods where Elijah, the prophet of God, challenged the prophets of Baal that were there because of Jezebel, the queen of Israel, they had a challenge where they made two different sacrifices and altars where there was a moat around it, water poured all over the stack of wood, and first to try to get their god to answer them were the prophets of Baal, and they were playing in their tambourines, probably like Hare Krishna's, dancing, calling on their god all day long. Pretty soon Elisha started jeering at them, well maybe he's away on vacation, or using the latrine, you know, yelled louder, and that made them, you know, more agitated, and they started cutting themselves, which was something that they did in the worship of Baal to show how serious

they were. And finally, you know, Elisha says, spread out, you know, and called upon the name of the Lord, and everything including the water in the moat is incinerated.

Then he gave the order, and all the prophets of Baal were gathered up and killed. False prophets. So Nahum was expecting some kind of show like that.

Instead, he's just told to go dip in the Jordan seven times, and he'd be restored. So he goes off storming in a rage. So Nahum's hope was so high, he created a false expectation in his mind, and was greatly upset when he was asked to do this simple task.

Nahum, displaying very unbecoming behavior, left with his entourage. But as they were leaving, we find out he's got a redeeming quality. One of his servants went up to him and said, my father, which is not the normal way, you know, a slave addresses their master.

You know, keep that in mind. You know, my father, if you were asked to do something great, wouldn't you do it? How much more when they just tell you to go and dip in the river? And the voice of reason touched his heart, and he humbled himself and went down to the river. And dipped himself seven times in the water, and came up fully restored, where his flesh was as white as snow, and rotting off was as fresh as a child's skin.

Could you imagine his elation, his surprise, when he would go to the Temple of Rimmon, which is the Temple of Baal? I'm sure he was begging Baal to heal him, only to have his words fall on deaf ears. And here he finds a prophet in Israel, and meets the God of Israel through obedience, and is blessed. It showed a unique relationship between him and his attendants, and that's one of family.

This tells us that Nahum and his wife must have been very kind to their staff. Is it any wonder that the little Israeli girl, who was Mrs. Nahum's maid servant, was more than happy to share with her mistress the news about the prophet in Samaria. Nahum takes the advice of his attendant, humbled himself, obeyed the command of the prophet, and received the blessing.

He went from rage to sensibility, humbled himself, and he exercised self-control, and got the blessing. What joy, what exhilaration to have flesh like a young child again. His flesh did not receive the healing until he obeyed God's command.

And isn't that something we can apply to lessons we know in our church today? When we're told by Christ, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Are you saved? If you just agree, yeah, hey, that sounds great, I believe, I'm saved. Well, you're not.

What are you lacking? Baptism. You gotta obey. You gotta go down in the river.

You gotta dip those seven times. We don't have to do that. We just are immersed and come up clean, just like Nahum did.

We don't receive God's blessings until we humble ourselves and obey his word. That's how we show our love to God, and that's how we show an obedient faith to God, truly showing repentance. Listen to Jesus' words in John 14, 21 to 23.

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. Then Judas, not Judas Iscariot,

said, but Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus replied, if anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.

My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. What comforting words. So our obedience to his word is how we show our love to God.

When we do that, the Godhead makes their home in our hearts, and that makes us the living temple of God. Holy Spirit is in us. God the Father is in us, and Jesus is in us.

All three of the Godhead reside within us. That makes us very special people. Not only are we created in God's image, but we have God in us, and that's how eventually the Spirit starts working on us inside out to change us into the image of his Son, Jesus.

We're told that in the Roman letter, and that's also how God pours out his love to us through Holy Spirit into our hearts. So Naaman had received a miracle from God via the prophet. His hope of being cured was met, and his hope was replaced with faith.

Naaman returned to Elisha and confessed his faith in the God of Israel, saying, Now I know that there is no God in the world except in Israel. Naaman instantly repented of his idol worship. How often do you think Naaman asked Rimmon for a healing, only to hear crickets? Now I know.

Doesn't that sound a lot like the people of Samaria, when the woman who met Jesus at the well went and told them everything the prophet had told her, and they came back and stayed with Jesus two full days? And at the end of those two days, they said, and because of his words, many more became believers, and they said to the woman, We no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we know and have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. Very much like the joyful burst that came out of Naaman.

Now I know there's a God of Israel, and he's the only God. Naaman had hope because the words of a little Israeli slave girl. His hope turned into faith in God because he obeyed the words of the man of God and was healed.

Do you think Naaman and his wife were grateful to that little girl when they got back home? I could imagine him just throwing his arms around that little girl. I'm guessing she too would call him my father one day. Naaman was a changed man.

He offered Elisha literally a fortune, but the man of God refused the offer. The love and mercy of God cannot be bought with money. Naaman then had two more requests for the prophet.

One, that he was permitted to take home a couple of donkey loads of Israeli dirt, earth, in which he could set up a place where he could worship from Syria on Israeli soil, just to feel like he's closer to God. That's a new believer's idea. God's everywhere.

And then his second request was that he be forgiven whenever he escorts the king into the temple of Baal, and the king bows to his God, and Naaman has to go down with him. He said, please, may God forgive me for bowing as I'm helping the king. And what was Elisha's gracious reply? Go in peace.

That leaves our last character in this narrative, Gehazi. What a character. Gehazi is Elisha's assistant, perhaps the same way that Elisha was Elijah's assistant.

They probably were both of the school of prophets, students who were being trained by the prophets. Gehazi witnessed many of Elisha's miracles, including the raising of the Shunammite woman's son from the dead. So he himself was a witness of God's power and mercy, and was active in Elisha's ministry.

So we see a change in the character of Gehazi. When Gehazi saw all that treasure that was rejected by Elisha heading back to Syria, he gives in to temptation. He starts reasoning to himself as to why he should have some of that treasure.

He coveted those things. He had a desire for those things. The desire was probably always there, but was in check because he was with a man of God and was trying to learn about God himself.

And so he had mastery over those things. But when he saw a man changed by the grace of God because of obedience, leaving with a fortune, that just got the best of Gehazi. He started bubbling and percolating inside and couldn't contain himself.

And that ugly word greed reared its ugly head and deceived him. Gehazi's lust for material wealth caused him not to just covet, and maybe even to the point of envied after those things. He lied to the Spirit of God.

As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him. In his lie to Naaman, he claimed that Elisha changed his mind and wanted to provide some clothes and money for a couple of visiting prophets who just showed up. Liar! When Naaman hears Gehazi's lie, he believes him and is more than happy to help out the prophet and gives more than is requested, showing a generous spirit.

Gehazi returns back to his master's house and the prophet asks him where he had been. This was Gehazi's chance to admit his sin, but he denied being anywhere and lied again to Elisha's face. He lied once to God, though indirectly.

And Elisha said, did I not go with you in spirit when the man turned from his chariot to meet him? Being a prophet of God and having God's spirit in him gave him the ability to know Gehazi's heart and to see what was going on that a normal person couldn't know. Gehazi profited off of God's free gift of grace to Naaman. His actions could have had negative results concerning Naaman's faith.

Had Naaman found out about the lie, the scam Gehazi just pulled over on him could have changed his opinion about Gehazi, Elisha, and the God of Israel himself. Gehazi's greed was so great it became an idol to him. Gehazi's greed betrayed the trust between Elisha the prophet and his student.

And does that sound familiar to you? It was because of greed and that Judas Iscariot betrayed his master. One student betrayed his teacher, Jesus Christ. God set his face against Gehazi and took Naaman's leprosy and cursed him with it.

He would wear leprosy all the rest of his days and should he have children, they would become lepers. Though Naaman probably never found out about Gehazi's treachery, Gehazi's sin made God look bad. That's what can happen when a child of God is caught up in sin.

We soil the name we wear. We're Christians. We soil the name of Christ, Jesus Christ. We soil the name of his father in heaven. Romans 2, 23 and 24 and 2 Peter 2, 2 talk about how the Christian can

soil the name of God. You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written, God's name is blasphemy among the Gentiles because of you.

And many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. Our sin hurts God in the church. It smears his good name and it can cause unbelievers to reject God, mock God and mock his church.

Unbelievers will use that as an excuse not to believe in the very one who can save them from their sins. Galatians 3, 5 and 6 says, put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Did you catch that? Greed is idolatry. We normally think of idolatry as some graven image set up that we bow down and worship to. But idolatry is also covetousness, envy and greed, the desire of the eye, the lust for things, the lust for what you don't have.

God knows we need things and he provides for us everything we need for life and godliness. But all the shiny little baubles, we don't need that. Yet has he wanted baubles and made it an idol in his life? He may as well just bow down to it.

So that's putting the desire for things on a level as worship. Greed and lust of the eye puts those objects above the importance of you trusting in God for the things we need in life. Not being content with what you have also makes you ungrateful.

It shows you have your priorities way out of line. Gehazi's lies made things worse for him. Lying is the opposite of truth and God is the God of all truth.

His word is truth. When you are a known liar, how can you say whatever you say, be trusted again? So in that moment of weakness, he became more like Satan, who is said by God to be the father of all lies. It says in Revelation that those who practice lying will be cast into the lake of fire.

Gehazi left the presence of Elisha ashamed, embarrassed, frightened and stricken with an incurable disease. But he must have come to his senses at some point because Gehazi left the presence of Elisha stricken with an incurable disease and he must have come to his senses and repented and asked for forgiveness just like the prodigal son did. A couple of chapters later we see one and the same Gehazi serving Elisha the prophet, though still a leper.

And this was a story of a little slave girl sharing her faith. It was a story of the hope of one man to be cured of this deadly disease and how it created humility in that once proud heart, which led to obedience to God's word. That also led to faith and healing and peace with God.

The story also shows that even a believer can fall into temptation of lust of the eye, which is greed and the consequences of that sin. The apostle John warned the church with these final words at the end of his letter. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

You think of all the things John could have told them for parting words. Farewell, be of good cheer. No, he said keep yourselves from idols.

Who was he writing to? The church. This is something that can snag us. Look at how Satan tried to snag Christ with baubles.

You can have all this if you bow down and worship me. He tried to get Christ to lust after worldly things and worldly power. Now did our Lord and Master answer him with truth, God's word.

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord. Leave for me Satan.

Satan left, but would return again at a more opportune time. And that can happen to us. We have to train ourselves to say no.

When we find ourselves really thinking way too much about stuff, we got to slam the brakes on. Who am I serving? So this message was for outsiders like Naaman. There's a prophet in Israel, and there is a Savior that we all need to know.

Same message. And also, if you get caught up in unrepentant sin, you can go away with sin sticking to you like leprosy sticking to Gehazi. If you find little white patches on your skin, you've been trying to avoid temptation, come forward.

We'll pray for you. The strength of the church will pray that you will be strong. Promise me, stand and sing.