

GRACE UNDERSTOOD RESTORES. GRACE MISUNDERSTOOD ROTTS.

2 Kings 5

Introduction

This is an enormous privilege to be here. I am excited, getting to preach where my dad normally does is an awesome opportunity, but I'm also nervous. I'm charged with teaching, teaching a lot of people who taught me.

Around 70 people would have been involved in some sort of leadership capacity in my life while growing up here at Cornerstone. From the nursery through the elementary Sunday Schools and on through the youth group. All the teachers, snack prep, small group leaders, diaper changers, VBS volunteers, and bus drivers would have put (based on some rough estimation) around 39,000 hours into my life. Even at \$10.00 an hour that's close to \$400,000 dollars I owe you for what you did in my life. Yes, Taylor and I are on an intern budget, but we have a long term plan and some investments that should go through and eventually I can pay you all back, and I won't owe you anything.

On the flip side I am working with college students and I know being in college you are tight on cash, but I'm going to get a good return for the hours I'm putting into your life.

How repulsive is that? It even feels sacrilegious trying to put a dollar value on what has been done for Christ out of love for the church

Attempting to pay back something that was intended to be a gift robs the receiver from the encouragement of the gift and it robs the giver of the joy of giving that gift. Even worse would be giving a gift and then using what you have given as leverage against the recipient for your own personal gain.

So where are we jumping in the middle of here in 2 Kings? Well, around 930 B.C. the kingdom of Israel split. Crossing into the 9th century (800's B.C.) Elijah is the man of God, master, his apprentice is Elisha. 2 chapters into 2 Kings, Elijah goes up in the fiery chariots and Elisha takes over. I like Elisha, he does some odd and crazy things, but I really like him because when youth made fun of him for being bald, he had bears mull them.

But we are in chapter 5

Scene 1

2 Kings 5:1-5a

Syria is a main world power at this point. There is an uneasy truce between Syria and Israel right now. Israel's idolatry causes a break down in the kingdom, it splits, and becomes less of a force militarily. Basically, Israel was not worth the trouble for Syria to conquer them. This status is short lived.

1. When I understand God's grace my life brings restoration.

2 Kings 5:3

Before we talk about this servant girl I do not want you to miss a short phrase in verse 1. Naaman was not the one who was causing his victory, rather it was the Lord. Now this is not what this sermon is going to be focusing on, but it would do some of your souls a favor to rest in the sovereign control of God despite what we see around us. The sovereignty of God was first noted in the Old Testament before it was in the New Testament.

Why did she have every 'right' to withhold knowledge she had from Naaman? What rights and entitlements do you think you have?

(Take up your cross and follow me, Matthew 16:24-25) That is what you are biblically entitled to. Pick up that which is going to kill you and start marching. Why does this work? Because suffering leads to salvation. Grace understood leads to restoration.

Many of you have strained relationships with people in your lives. Some of you have a long list of reasons that this person has given you to have the right to be bitter, angry, withhold forgiveness, I can love them but I don't have to like them. Let me tell you if I were that servant girl and I knew about how to heal my captor of Leprosy I would be very tempted to take a sadistic pleasure in withholding that knowledge as a means of revenge. But this servant girl understood grace. The rest of this story line, the rest of this plot hinges on this. A girl who was taken away from her home, living to serve a different people and caring for them despite what they had done to her. Who does that sounds like?

Scene 2

Read 2 Kings 5b-14

2. Am I manipulating God's calling on my life by filtering it through what is convenient for me?

2 Kings 5:11-12

what this disease symbolizes in Scripture

Manipulation/Convenience Verse 11-12

This assumes you are dealing with God's calling, when I was a junior in high school, Dena McGoldrick asked me about what I was going to do for college and if I was praying about it. I briefly said yes and quickly exited the conversation, knowing I had lied. Did it matter if I prayed about it if I knew what I wanted?

Well it matters a lot. If Naaman had gone and washed in the rivers of his homeland the story would end right here. None of this is going how Naaman had planned. First Naaman goes to Jerhorem the Israelite king. This freaks the Israelite king out because he knows he cannot heal Naaman and thinks this is a set up that will result in an excuse for war. Elisha h

ears of the news and is not freaked out because he knows who is orchestrating all of this (remember who gave victory in verse 1) and Naaman then goes to Elisha who has the audacity to not even go out and greet Naaman after Naaman traveled for miles. Do you even know who Naaman is? He greatest living military mind, and the 2nd most powerful person alive who brings his entourage up to your front door, maybe even surrounded the house and you send out a servant to meet him. Where is the big show? Where is the fire that is called down from heaven where is the ensemble of lightning bolts and earth rumbling peels of thunder? Elisha! there is no entertainment value in sending out your servant with a bathing ritual. That is not what I want. Well, Elisha serves a more powerful king. One who's calling on your life is not determined by what you want. How are you reacting to God's calling on your life? Naaman decided it was stupid and went away in anger. It was not the easiest way for Naaman to get what he wanted.

Jesus, you would have so much more strength if you turned this stone into bread, that would be easy for you right? Aren't you the Son of God? Jesus just bow down to me and you can have the kingdoms of this world. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. I can give you the whole world and you don't even have to endure the cross. Throw yourself off this temple Jesus. The angels will catch you, and everyone will see and know you are to be worshiped. You won't have to deal with the crowds shouting crucify him! Or the thorns, or the nails, or the denial or the betrayal. Oh how convenient would that be?

Water takes the path of least resistance, which is why rivers are often crooked, is that your walk with God? What's easiest for you?

This whole event hinges on the servant girl at the beginning but Naaman is yet again in verse 13 rescued by his servants. He submits to God's way and is healed. Do you not see that God's grace continues to draw Naaman in not because of who he is but in spite of who he is?

Had God allowed Naaman to choose what Naaman wanted then Naaman would have cured his physical problem in his own way and still remained spiritually bankrupt. But praise God that decision is not ours. What were the servant girls parents thinking when after the turmoil of a raid settled down and people were picking up the remains of a broken village and they find a piece of their daughter's clothing in the direction the Assyrians ran off to? God is this what you want for our lives? We raise this child you give us only to be taken away and used for who knows what by these gentiles? And God says it is not up to you. You had her long enough, you raised her right, now I am going to use her. And people until the end of time will read about what your daughter did and my name will be magnified.

How do we know that Naaman was not just physically healed?

Scene 3

Read 2 Kings 5:15-19a

3. God's grace trumps any other identity I have.

2 Kings 5:15-19

We have some interesting cross cultural dilemmas going on here. First Naaman tries to offer the gifts now as a thanks and not as a bargaining tool to Elisha, who is now meeting Naaman face to face. Elisha still does not accept as this is not the reason Elisha was used in Naaman's healing.

Second, Naaman knows that as a big wig in Assyria he is going to be expected to do some things involving the gods of Assyria in certain ceremonies there. He is asking for Elisha's blessing and Elisha gives it to him. But what I really want you to notice here is Naaman's request for dirt.

Back then there was a territorial understanding of the limits of divinity. The land that you are in determines the god that you serve. Naaman was probably not going to come back to Israelite territory so he solved the dilemma by requesting a portable amount of Israelite land.

Naaman did not want to leave God, so he could not leave God's territory therefore he had to take God's territory with him. He would use this dirt to place his knees in when worshipping the one true God.

Notice a donkey is carrying the means through which this gentile will worship the one true God.

Naaman, who was a gentile, who should have never heard about God now leaves as a more devoted follower of God than many of the Israelites. The gospel going to all nations is a New Testament theme built off of Old Testament truths. If you understand God's grace you will be used by Him to lead others into restoration. If you do not understand God's grace your involvement in God's work will rot your heart.

Scene 4

Read 2 Kings 5:19b-27

4. When I am involved in God's work, what brings me the most joy?

2 Kings 5:20-27

Gehazi is determined to get something out of this. Yes, this mighty man of valor just came to know God, but Elisha look what we could have cashed in on. Common lady, if you were going to pour that all over Jesus why couldn't you have just gave him the bottle unbroken, then we could have sold that and given some of the money to the poor. For Gehazi acquiring some wealth was the end goal. (verse 20)

Nothing else mattered as long as he got to that goal, (As surely as the Lord lives, Gehazi's determination was as strong to him as the Lord's existence) so he lies about the need for taking care of two other people. Lying is ok just as long as he gets what he wants. You get me those 30 pieces of silver and I don't care what you do to Jesus.

Are you seeing how grace misunderstood rots? Gehazi had been with Elisha for a while. He saw the barren womb conceive he has been a part of raising the dead to life, he saw the leper healed, but tragically he also saw the wealth and pleasures this world had to offer and substituted them for

God. Which is why nothing else mattered as long as he got to his god. He lies to Naaman in verse 22 about the two other men, he lies to Elisha in verse 25 and leaves himself a leper.

This finishes with an Israelite making the tragic mistake of choosing a substitute for the Lord while a Gentile convert has discovered that what his servant girl said about the Lord's prophet is true.

One of the most encouraging things about Cornerstone is the amount of things we are involved in. It is encouraging to be a part of a family and serve. But does everyone really know how much you put into the church? What you have to give up to make certain things happen. Do other people really appreciate you? There are parts of this church that just would not happen if you were not here. What brings you the most joy? Do you understand God's grace? The right hand does not need to know what the left hand is doing!

Go back to not owing people anything that invested into me at this church.

Look, if I try to pay everyone back for the ways they have helped me so I don't have to feel in debt to them then I miss the grace, I miss the love. If you see serving God as a reason for recognition and bestowing upon yourself the title of the church philanthropist then you miss the point! If you are trying to earn what only Jesus' finished work on the cross can secure then you are missing the point. Restoration or rotting? Do you understand God's grace?

Call Gehazi and Servant girl up

The servant girl was taken away from her homeland. Gehazi got to stay home.

The servant girl worked for a godless gentile. Gehazi worked for the Man of God.

The servant girl saw Naaman as an opportunity to show God's grace. Gehazi saw Naaman's condition as an opportunity to cash in on God's grace

The servant girl cured one man of leprosy and affected his spiritual condition forever. Gehazi brought on himself and his descendants leprosy forever.

Grace understood restores, grace misunderstood rots.

Gehazi is similar to the older brother who when his prodigal brother returns home is angry about not receiving even greater earthly rewards. Gehazi is like Judas Iscariot who uses Jesus as a means to an end, only sin take you so much farther than what it promises. And neither Gehazi's end nor the end of Judas is a picture you have colored in Sunday School. The servant girl gave what knowledge she had and Naaman was healed. The little boy gave he had, 5 loaves and 2 fish and Jesus feeds the 5,000. Jesus gave all he had while we were yet sinners and died for us, conquered death and now multitudes of people will be in right standing before God.

Maybe you are like Naaman and need to bow to the calling of God into his family which only happens by calling on Jesus as Lord and Savior. But more likely in this room we have some servant girls and we have some Gehazi's. Do you understand God's grace?