

It's That Simple
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North East United Methodist Church
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Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel." Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes.

He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me."

It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean." But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.

When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel..."

-2 Kings 5:1-15, [NASB](#)

Naaman is a great commander...but he has leprosy...goes to Israel on the word of a slave girl...indignant...Elisha sends out servant and here he is with gifts...wash in dirty Jordan when rivers in Aram clean...servants... uncontaminated by pride...tell him and convince him...cleansed/healed

First, **Naaman allows pride to get in the way of his relationship with God**, to get between what God has in store for him...

First, Naaman has already imagined what it would be like – probably on his chariot ride from Aram he daydreamed about this great prophet coming out to meet him – the grand ritual that he would go through – how there might be a clap of thunder or a lightning strike or at least a moment when the God of Israel’s presence was overpowering and he would be healed – he says, *“I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!”* (verse 11).

Naaman has it mapped out – but it is God’s script, not ours that we must follow. And God works through the rough hands of a servant, the dirty waters of the Jordan, and the common everyday instead of the flashy and loud.

This is what Naaman would not allow. He expected more and if it was not for his servants, he would have missed out on God’s offer of healing.

Are we allowing God to speak to us through the common, everyday? Are we expecting flashy miracles or are we seeing God working in the small, everyday stuff? Are we missing out on God’s blessings because we think we have it figured out how God working in our lives will look? Remember it is God’s script, not ours.

Secondly, Naaman, the great commander, well respected, is upset by Elisha’s treatment. He comes from a far, from the great country of Aram, Israel’s oppressor, with gifts...to see the great prophet...and he sends out a servant. A servant. It says, *“But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, ‘I thought that for me he would surely come out...’”* *“For me...”*

Salvation comes in the simple act of obedience – submitting to God’s script not our own...putting away, letting go of arrogance...of pride... Naaman is ready to go back to Aram without being healed because of his pride...Elisha did not treat him as a man of his status should be treated... because of this he is ready to forego God’s blessing...

A newly elected politician was visiting Washington, DC to get acquainted. He was visiting in the home of one of the ranking senators who was trying to interpret the bizarre wonder of the capitol. As they stood looking out over the Potomac River, an old deteriorating log floated by in view on the river. The old-timer said, "This city is like that log out there." The fledgling politician asked: "How's that?" The senator came back, "Well, there are probably more than one hundred thousand grubs, ants, bugs and critters on that old log as it floats down the river. And I imagine every one of them thinks that he's steering it."

Naaman thought he was in the driver's seat. He thought that he was steering. How many of us believe that we are steering through this life... that we are in control?

If we are to receive God's blessings, feel God's presence in our lives, **we must recognize that we must give up the steering wheel**...we must give up control allowing God to be at the steering wheel. Naaman lets his pride get in the way and if it wasn't for the servants, who are uncontaminated by pride, he would have steered his way back to Aram and away from God's blessings. Naaman must humble himself.

Are you and I letting God steer us though this life? Are we riding in the driver's seat or the passenger seat? Are we under the illusion that we are floating on this log through the expanse of a million universes and are somehow in control? Is our pride getting in the way of God's blessings for us? Remember – God's script, not ours.

Lastly, Naaman lets his national pride, his prejudice, to get in the way of God's blessings. He says, *"Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?"* (verse 12).

As Christians we must constantly question whether we are letting our pride in our country define who we are instead of our relationship to Jesus Christ define who we are...as Americans do we find ourselves carrying subtle, underlying prejudices for those outside our borders...

Saint Augustine declared: *“God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full – there’s nowhere for Him to put it.”*

Naaman’s hands are full of pride in his country of Aram – so much so that he is willing to allow his anger and prejudice against Israel, his feelings of Aram being superior to this other country and people – to drive him away from God’s blessings. He is willing to forego healing because why would he wash in the dirty Jordan instead of the clean and beautiful rivers of his own country.

Have we ever allowed national opinion or political affiliation to determine what we believe about an issue, how we feel about a certain group of people, rather than leaning on scripture to guide us? Have we ever allowed our pride in being part of this great nation to birth in us prejudices against others outside our borders? Have we ever missed out on God's blessings by refusing to give to charities that are not only outside our community but outside the borders of our nation?

God’s script, not ours.

Naaman’s expectations, pride, and prejudice almost cause him to lose out on the healing God had in store for him. But when he puts away his expectations, swallows his pride, and empties himself of the prejudice he has for those who do not share his homeland...when Naaman opens his ears to hear the voice of someone different from himself...get himself out of the way...he is able to experience God's blessings...he is led to the Jordan River where he washes and is cleansed and his leprosy is healed.

Jesus referred to this story in Luke 4...Jesus was explaining to the people in Nazareth, in the synagogue, explaining that God’s saving activity is open to all who will accept it...whether that person is from Israel or like Naaman from Aram...**Jesus wanted the people to understand that God's grace is available to all who ask, who are willing to listen...it is that simple...**

Our community, our neighborhoods, our world is full of people who need to hear this message...who need people who care for them, who are willing to speak up and like Naaman’s servants, help them cut through expectations, pride, and prejudice that would hold them back from receiving God’s love

and salvation...that would hold them back from a relationship with Jesus Christ...we must invite them to hear, help them come to the understanding that God's grace is available for them.

Come to the altar today...to Holy Communion...and experience that cleansing that Naaman experienced. Do not allow your expectations, your pride, your prejudices, or your love of other things to get in the way of the simple Gospel message to follow God's script, to open your hearts to His love? Come to the altar today and feed at Christ's table, remembering His sacrifice, realizing the depths Jesus went to out of love for you. Come to the altar today and rise to tell the world that God's love and grace is available to all who ask, who accept it, who follow...**it is that simple.**