

The Leprosy That Clings -- 2 Kings 5:19-27 -- Sermon 2 of 2 from 2 Kings 5

When the leper saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing. Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Fortune 500 companies can't exist without them. Restaurants cannot seat patrons without them. Hotel guests can't count sheep without them. Schools can't educate without them. Churches can't proceed with the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper without them. And parents can't maintain their sanity in their home without enlisting their offspring to become a part of them. They are the Set Up, Break Down, and Clean Up Crew. The weapons of their warfare are not carnal. They are Arm and Hammer, the Original Scrub Daddy Sponge, and Mr. Clean Magic Eraser instead. They create the environment that makes productivity, profit, progress, and prosperity possible.

When last we gathered at the river, we witnessed the Set Up, Break Down, and Clean Up Crew of 2 Kings 5 perform some of their greatest work. One of them was a Jewish servant of Naaman's wife who said: "if only Naaman would see the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." The others were direct servants of Naaman who courageously told him: "let's go gather at the river so that you can dip in the Jordan seven times in order to be healed of leprosy." As a result, the leprosy left him when Naaman came up from the water for the 7th and final time. The old had gone. The new had come. Naaman was a new creation. But friends, I want to tell you this morning that just as Luke 15 doesn't end with the prodigal son returning home with people shouting "hallelujah," 2 Kings 5 doesn't end with leprosy leaving and people singing "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." Instead, it ends with leprosy clinging. You see, if it is possible to create an environment in your heart for leprosy to leave. It is equally possible to create an environment in your heart for leprosy, spiritual leprosy, to cling. And the great cautionary tale for the people of God in 2 Kings 5 comes from the person the leprosy clung to. It wasn't the pagan, Gentile, Naaman. It was instead the Executive Director of Elisha's Set Up, Break Down, and Clean Up Crew. His name was Gehazi. Today, in 2 Kings 5:19-27 we will see the environment he created in his heart for that leprosy to cling.

After Naaman had traveled some distance, ²⁰ Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him." ²¹ So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked.

²² "Everything is all right," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent^[d] of silver and two sets of clothing.'" ²³ "By all means, take two talents," said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. ²⁴ When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. ²⁵ When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" "Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi answered. ²⁶ But Elisha said to him, "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?" ²⁷ Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever." Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

1. A Familiarity Problem (5:24)

- **Facetime:** (1) I called my daughter on Facetime two weeks ago. She answered with: "Why are you facetimeing me? You've never done it before." (2) To which I responded, "I thought you had to download some app to do it." (3) I've had an iPhone for a year. And for a whole year, facetime was right there at my fingertips. But I never applied it to my life.
- **The Problem:** Gehazi was surrounded by the truth. But he never applied the truth to his life.
- **Who Elisha and Gehazi Were:** (1) Elisha was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom in the period of Israel's history called the Divided Monarchy. It was a dark period of apostasy and evil among the kings. We only need to say three words to tell you how bad it was: Ahab and Jezebel. (2) During this dark period, God sent the greatest prophets. Chief among them were Elijah, who performed 8 miracles (i.e., fire from heaven) and Elisha, who succeeded Elijah after his death and performed 16 miracles (a double portion). (3) Gehazi was not just one of many servants of Elisha. He was the chief servant. The servant buck stopped with him. And he witnessed each miracle.
- **What Gehazi Witnessed (It Will Sound Familiar):** (1) A Barren Shunamite Gentile Become Pregnant (4:17) - ¹⁷ *But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.* (2) This Woman's Son Brought Back from the Dead (4:36-37) - ³⁶ *Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite." And he did. When she came, he said, "Take your son." ³⁷ She came in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.* (3) The Feeding of the 100 with a Few Loaves of Bread (4:33) - ⁴³ *"How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked. But Elisha answered, "Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: 'They will eat and have some left over.'" (4) Naaman Healed of Leprosy (5:14) - *his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.**
- **What Gehazi Did Instead (5:24):** ²⁴ *When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.* Gehazi had the truth at his fingertips but never applied it and the leprosy clung.

2. An Enemies Problem (5:20)

- **Winston Churchill vs Lady Astor:** (1) Are two of the greatest enemies from history. Churchill was an English Statesman. Lady Astor was an aristocratic member of the British Parliament. Churchill wanted to go to war against the Nazis. Lady Astor didn't. (2) Both had a sharp and piercing tongue. Lady Astor once said, "Mr. Churchill if I was married to you, I would put arsenic in your tea." To which he responded, "if I was married to you, I would drink it."

- **The Problem:** Gehazi witnessed Elisha's compassion on his enemies. But he had none himself.
- **God's People and Enemies in the Scriptures:** (1) What God's People are Called to Do (Mt 5:44-46) - *44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. . . 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?* (2) Why They Must Do It (Rom 5:10) - *10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!* (3) How They Must Demonstrate It (2 Sam 9:1, 13) - *David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" . . . 13 And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table; he was lame in both feet.*
- **But Gehazi and His Enemy (5:20):** *20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean.* (1) "This Aramean" is derogatory. (2) Instead of instituting love, compassion, and mercy for undeserving people like he saw Elisha institute, he continued to hate to the point that he did something almost as shameful as murder in that culture: He exploited him, lied to him, stole from him, and therefore brought the shame directly to him. As a result, the leprosy clung.

3. An In Vain Problem (5:20, 22)

- **The Evolution of Signatures:** (1) Have you ever signed a digital contract? It comes to you by email. But now it takes all of 15 seconds to sign an initial a digital contract because the application the contract is in takes you to the place in the contract where you sign and/or initial. (2) But there is one type of document that's still signed the old-fashioned way. It's your kid's report card. Why? Because if a digital option were available, it would be forged by students more than pawn shop fingerprint.
- **The Problem:** Gehazi misused the name of the Lord to sanctify his own desires.
- **Exodus 20:7 in the King's English:** *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* (1) To take the name of the Lord in vain means to take the name of the Lord – which even the people of the OT considered to holy to be spoken aloud – and misuse it for your benefit. (2) The main idea behind the command is saying "thus saith the Lord" when you know good and well the Lord didn't really "saith." You did. And you attached His Holy Name to your nefarious purpose.
- **How Gehazi Takes the Name of the Lord in Vain:** (1) He does it directly (5:20) - *20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him."* Derrick's Translation: "I will go to him in the name of the living God, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the One Who Makes Leprosy Flee and Who Makes Leprosy Cling and get something from him." That's pure evil, in the name of God. (2) He does it by association (5:22a) - *"My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Elisha and the other prophets did take the name of the Lord seriously. That's why they didn't run after Naaman. Gehazi used his association for person benefit, using the righteous to lend credibility to his request. That's eviler than the first. (3) He does it by misrepresentation (5:22b) - *Please give them a talent^d of silver and two sets of clothing."* Notice how the request is not as much as Naaman originally offered Elisha. Gehazi does this to make himself appear modest. But the worst part of the request comes in the form of the pronoun "them." Derrick's translation: "This is not for me. This is for them. I'm doing it for them, Naaman. I'm humble and don't need anything. But they, particularly Elisha, changed their minds because they do. As a result, the leprosy clings.*

4. Truthfulness Problem (5:25, 26, 27)

- **Letters of Recommendation:** (1) I write those bad boys all the time. 99% of them I'm glad to write. It's the 1% who can legally sue for writing something negative on a letter of recommendation that I'm concerned about, even if what I write is truthful. (2) So, I came up with a little phrase I plan to use should I have to write one of those letters for that 1% person again: "Dear Sir(s) I enthusiastically, wholeheartedly recommend this candidate to you with no qualifications whatsoever." That will take care of it.
- **The Problem:** Gehazi refused truthfulness when truthfulness was his only recourse.
- **Gehazi Had an Opportunity (5:25):** *25 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?"* (1) He's asked a direct question by Elisha. When you get asked a direct question by a police officer in an interrogation or in an interrogation from your mom or dad, those individuals already know the answer. (2) But instead of being truthful when truthfulness was his only recourse, he lies: *"Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi answered.* (3) We will never know if Elisha would have extended the same grace, he showed Naaman to Gehazi because Gehazi didn't give him that opportunity.
- **There Was a Reason for Gehazi's Opportunity (5:26):** *26 But Elisha said to him, "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?"* (1) Do you know what El Roi means? It means "the God who sees." Elisha equates that idea to his spirit being with Gehazi here. God knew what he was up to. Elisha did to. But he let him return in order to give him an opportunity to do something he's never done in spite of being a servant of Elisha: live in the truth instead of being surrounded by it. But Gehazi rejects the truth even when confronted with El Roi's all-seeing eye, and Elisha's by extension.
- **Consequently, Gehazi Gets a Different Opportunity (5:27):** *27 Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever." Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.* (1) It's a Personal Opportunity – Gehazi gets to experience the leprosy of Naaman because of the environment he created for it in his heart. It belonged not to Naaman anymore. He was a new creature. It belonged now to Gehazi. (2) It's an Impactful Opportunity - Elisha and Gehazi represent Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the NT, they would reject the Messiah from the line of Judah because they, like their ancestor Gehazi, were surrounded by truth but never applied it to their lives. As a result, the leprosy clung and continues to cling.