

Lessons from the Life of Elisha, Part 5: More Miracles and the Story of Naaman (2 Kings 4:38-5:16)

I. Recap of Last Lesson: The Shunammite Woman

- a. Elisha, a powerful, yet very poor prophet, is provided hospitality by “the Shunammite woman” and her husband. Desires to bless the couple and promises them a son as she was barren. She tells him not to lie to her, too precious a promise. She conceives and gives birth.
- b. Son becomes very ill. The woman hurries to Elisha, who is on Mount Carmel. He tells his servant Gehazi to take his staff back and touch the boy, to heal him. Gehazi does as he is told but he cannot heal the boy. The boy dies.
- c. Elisha comes down from the mountain, comes into the room of the boy, shuts the door and prays to God. He puts his mouth and eyes on the mouth and eyes of the boy and his hands on his hands and stretches himself out on the boy. The boy’s flesh becomes warm. Elisha does it again and the boy, after sneezing 7 times, is raised from the dead!
- d. Many lessons for us:
 - i. Hospitality – throughout Scripture we see how God gives special honor to those who entertain both strangers and those in the body of Christ
 1. Abraham and Sarah with the angels (**Gen. 18**);
 2. Job: “But I was very kind. For the stranger did not spend the night outside; my door was opened to everyone who came” (**Job 31:32**);
 3. Jesus, whatever you do for the least of these...(**Matthew 25**); do not ask your friends, relatives, but instead invite to dinner those who cannot repay you, the lame, maimed, the blind... (**Luke 14**)
 4. Qualification to be an elder includes that one “must be hospitable....” (**1 Tim. 3**)
 - ii. Faith and humility of the Shunammite woman – knew the prophet could save her son, fell at his feet, would not leave him, brutally honest about where she was at (“did I not tell you not to deceive me...”). A wonderful picture of how we need to be in prayer to God.

iii. Foreshadowing of Christ

1. The miraculous birth
2. Gehazi could not heal the boy with the staff/wood (the wood/cross without the prophet/Jesus is powerless)
3. The resurrection of the dead. That Elisha had the power to overcome death – points us to Jesus, who holds the keys of Hades and Death (**Rev. 1:18**), and who “destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (**Hebrews 2:14-16**).

II. **Elisha Feeds the Crowd**

a. Read **2 Kings 4:38-44**

b. Problems and Solutions

- i. Problem 1. Famine in the land and a group of hungry sons of the prophets (100 men). Elisha is determined to feed them.
 1. Solution 1: go find any type of herbs and plants you can find and make a stew. (This group is very poor. Grabbing unknown plants to eat!)
- ii. Problem 2: the plants are poisonous. “There is death in the pot!”
 1. Solution 2: Elisha performs a miracle: pours flour into the pot and heals the food so they are able to feed the people.
- iii. Problem 3: Still not enough food. (Another man comes with 20 loaves of barley bread and fruit cake but is told this will still not feed the crowd.)
 1. Solution 3: Elisha tells them to give out what they have and another miracle performed: “Thus says the Lord: ‘They shall eat and will leave some behind.’ So they ate and had some left over, according to the Word of the Lord.”
 - a. God provides for the current meal, everyone’s needs met, and provides some extra for tomorrow.

c. Foreshadowing of Jesus.

- i. Jesus’ miraculous feeding of two crowds with only a few loaves and fishes. 5,000 men in **Matthew 14**; 4,000 men in **Matthew 15** (besides men and children). Many more people, but eerily similar:
 1. Compassion of both the prophets.
 2. Determined to provide.

3. Each tells others to serve the people (“They do not need to go away, you give them something to eat” – great discipleship!)
4. People bewildered as to how this was going to happen.
5. Miracle is worked.
6. Both provide for the people with some left over (12 baskets for the 5,000; 7 baskets for the 4,000)
7. How much did the Scriptures (the story of Elisha) strengthen Jesus’ faith and resolve?
8. Jesus, unlike Elisha, calls his followers to eat the true bread, his flesh, which brings eternal life. (**John 6**)

d. Lessons for Us

- i. God has compassion for and goes through incredible lengths (by our standards!) to provide (and feed) his people.
 1. Elisha and Jesus (as described above)
 2. Manna and quail in the dessert. (**Exodus 16**)
 3. Elisha’s mentor Elijah: miraculously provided for in the desert as he was in hiding, fed by ravens. (**1 Kings 17**)
 4. *Pouyan’s \$1,000 need this past month met by surprise \$1,100 gift from our brother Chris’ boss!*
 5. Jesus says pray like this: “give us this day our daily bread” and “do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink but seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well” (**Matthew 6:11, 25, 33**)
 - a. when things get tough, easy to start focusing on my own needs, issues.
 - b. Let’s remember God LOVES to provide for his people. We need to replace worry and anxiety with seeking God’s kingdom and his righteousness. These are the spiritual weapons at our disposal!
 - c. Elisha is a great example for us. He is very poor with lots of reasons to worry. Yet he has great faith and trust in God to provide for him and others. (like Jesus)
- ii. God (working through Elisha) has the power over death.
 1. Saw this with him raising the Shunammite woman’s son from

the dead.

2. See it here removing death from the pot.
3. Foreshadowing of God's power over death, the resurrection of Christ, and the promise of our own victory over death. We will see and talk more about this later.

III. The Story of Naaman, Part 1: Naaman Healed of Leprosy

a. Read **2 Kings 5:1-16**

b. Story recap:

- i. Naaman is commander of the army of Syria, great and honorable in the eyes of the King of Syria. But he has leprosy.
- ii. Naaman is a Gentile, conducting raiding parties against Israel. Naaman is Israel's enemy!
- iii. A young girl from Israel is taken captive and is serving in Naaman's house and tells him about a prophet in Israel who could heal his leprosy.
- iv. Naaman tells the king the Syria, who then sends large amounts of silver and gold and clothes to the king of Israel in exchange for Naaman's healing.
- v. King of Israel thinks the king of Syria is picking a fight, no way he can heal someone from leprosy!
- vi. Elisha hears about it, and tells the king of Israel to send Naaman to Elisha.
- vii. Naaman comes with all his horses and chariots, gold and silver and clothes to Elisha, who does not receive him. (Law forbids contact with lepers.) Instead, tells him to go dip into the Jordan River 7 times.
- viii. Naaman is incensed, thought he would come out, meet him, lay hands on him and heal the leprosy. Turns away in rage and leaves.
- ix. Naaman's servants come to him and talk some sense into him. This is great news! The prophet just told you that you can be healed. If he had asked you to do something difficult, you would have done it! Instead, he told you something quite simple, just go take a bath in the Jordan and you will be clean!
- x. "So Naaman went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to Elisha's instruction, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was cleansed. Then he, with all his aides, returned to Elisha and came and stood before him; and he said, 'Indeed, now I have come to know that in all the earth there is no God except the God of Israel.'" (**2 Kings 5:14-15**)

- xi. The word for “dipped” in the Septuagint is “baptizo”, the Greek word for baptism. So, this would read: “So Naaman went down and baptized [himself] seven times in the Jordon...”

c. Lessons from this story

- i. King of Syria sends Naaman to the wrong guy! (Sends to King of Israel, rather than to Elisha, the prophet.) God’s ways are very different than the ways of this world. The king is not able to help!
- ii. “Let Naaman come to me, and he shall know there is a prophet in Israel.” (**2 Kings 5:8b**) We see Elisha’s faith, confidence, desire to defend and honor God’s greatness.
- iii. Naaman also has some wrong expectations and reactions.
 - 1. Bringing gold and silver to accomplish the task. Not needed for this healing! Elisha would accept no money.
 - a. Compare Elisha’s poverty and strong Spirit of God to heal with the king and Naaman, who have wealth and military might, but no power to overcome the disease.
 - b. Reminds me of Simon the Sorcerer who tries to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit with his money. (**Read Acts 8:18-24**)
 - i. Money cannot purchase the things and power of God.
 - 2. Expects the healing to happen a certain way. God has a different plan. Naaman gets angry and almost misses the entire blessing!
 - a. We can be so close to healing, grace, seeing God’s power, yet give up or don’t pass the test before us! So tragic.
 - b. Me: when single, doing really bad spiritually (depressed, discouraged, irresponsible, beaten up). Thought I might fall away. Started using a sobering Scripture as my debit card pin to remind me if I did leave God. I’m going to get through this! So glad I did. How different a trajectory of my life would have been if I had given up when times got tough.
 - c. May we humble ourselves and persevere through our trials; and never give up!

iv. Naaman, despite his short-comings, possesses great humility.

1. Listens to a servant girl to go seek out Elisha. (Desperation to be healed? Heard of other miracles? Nothing to lose?)
2. Listens to his servants who urge him to reconsider his initial response.
3. Ultimately Naaman obeys.
 - a. Reminds me of Jesus' parable of two sons, one says he won't go and work in the vineyard, but does, the other says he will, but doesn't. Point: the tax collectors and prostitutes (who humble themselves and obey) enter before the chief priests and the elders (who look like they are obeying, but are not). (**Matthew 21:28-32**)
 - b. This is very difficult: when you realize you are wrong, to then acknowledge and reverse direction.
 - i. Me this week: client matter, came to head with two other attorneys. We were all seeing part of the situation, but I was missing something and it was being pointed out to me. Every part of me wanted to justify myself! (I could feel the pride and anger.)
 - ii. So good to have different views and perspectives and environment where people can speak up. Sometimes leads to disagreements and misunderstanding. But reveals wisdom. Requires humility, which ALWAYS wins the day!!

v. Jesus references Naaman in **Luke 4:23-27**.

1. Jesus would be rejected by the Jews, but the Gentiles will accept him, in fact, God loves the Gentiles and sent his prophets (like he did with Naaman) to bless them and will send the Christ to them as well.
2. When they heard Jesus say this, the Jews were "filled with wrath" and tried to murder Jesus by throwing him off a cliff.
3. Imagine, your sister is kidnapped by an ISIS raiding party. The commander is then healed by God of a terrible disease. How do you feel? (God loves his enemies, will heal/forgive them if they repent and humble themselves before him.)

vi. We'll stop here and pick up the story during our next lesson.