

II Kings 5:1-14; Mt. 18:1-4; Water that Makes One Clean I. Great Men II. Little People III. God's Purpose
 Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who are the big people of our world today? Who are the movers
 and shakers of society- the people who speak and everyone stops to listen? Presidents, rulers? How
 about those with medical degrees? I heard that Dr. Fauci was asked if it would be okay for us to celebrate
 Thanksgiving this year. He did give us permission to go Trick or Treating at the end of the month! But
 when you think about it, who really has a lasting effect on the next generation. Who really influences the
 direction or society takes? The old saying- the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world is not too far off.
 In reality, it is the little people of today that have the largest impact on the next generation. Parents in the
 home, teachers in the school, elders and pastors in the church. The fact is, God often uses people who are
 small in the eyes of the world to carry out His purpose. The weak things of the world to shame the wise
 and the proud. God is not impressed by man's accomplishments- and He often humbles the proud as He
 exalts the lowly. So in our text this morning we are going to see a great contrast between great men in
 our passage and the little people who are used by God to bring change and direction. The powerful have
 no answer, while the simple and lowly people know what to do by faith. So today we consider this theme:
 The water of Israel alone makes the dirty clean!

I. Great Men

In our first point we will consider the great men of our passage- and there are 3. First of all we are
introduced to Naaman as ch. 5 opens. Now we know a lot about this man as he is central to our text.
 Naaman was the commander or the captain of the army. He was the captain of hosts- the leader of the
 armies of Syria. As the bands of soldiers went out, Naaman would be at their head, riding on a war horse
 or chariot. He led Syria's army into battle. Next, he was successful. As v. 1 says, the LORD had given
 victory to Syria by his hand. So he was the instrument of victory in the LORD'S hand. But which nation
 had Syria been victorious? Well, one of the nations that Syria had defeated was the nation of Israel. Back
 in I Kings 22, Syria defeated Israel at Ramoth Gilead where Ahab had been killed in battle. But the praises

of this man continue- he was a great man- very important in the eyes of his king and in his own eyes as well. The pride of Syria and proud in himself. He was highly honored- one who sat with kings and was a trusted advisor. A mighty man- highly respected by all- valiant in battle- filled with valor- exalted above all others in Syria. But all is not well- Naaman has a major problem as well. He is a leper- he has some skin disease or deformation of the flesh that makes him unclean. He is unsightly because of the growing infection that is taking away his sense of feeling- and one day will take away his very life. A man with everything- and yet without his health- he was an outcast. The next great man in our text is the King of Syria- his name was Ben Hadad as we found back in I Kings 22. Ben Hadad was the king of Syria- ruling from Damascus to the NE of Israel. This King of Syria sees his commander's plight- and sends a letter with Naaman to seek healing for his trusted advisor. Ben Hadad's message is in v. 6- I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you might heal him- cure him of his leprosy. The King of Syria has a problem as well- he can't heal his servant- so he is forced to look to the nation of Israel for aid. The gods and prophets of Syria cannot help! And finally, we have our 3rd mighty man- the king of Israel. At this point, Joram (also known as Jehoram) is the king of Israel in the line of Ahab. Upon receiving this message, he tears his cloths in v. 7. Because he has the same problem as Naaman and Ben Hadad- he can't heal this man- he has no power to take away this leprosy. In fact, Joram is afraid that this is a stunt to incite violence. He tears his cloths as a sign of sorrow and distress! That Ben Hadad is looking for a fight- and he is using this ruse as a means to engage in battle. The treaty and peace between Israel and Syria is fragile- Joram knows he has no power to stand up to Syria- and if he can't heal Naaman- Syria will be angry and declare war on Israel- so he thinks. But Joram has forgotten that the God of Israel is not like the gods of the nations! He has no faith! So there are lots of big men in our text- but they are all rather impotent. They can't do anything about this leprosy. It would be like the President of the United States picking a fight with the president of China- imagined or not- any offense that leads to war will end badly for both nations. And there is the matter of all this gold and silver. No amount of money can secure the healing necessary. Naaman had taken rather expensive gifts with him in v. 5- to persuade the king and his prophet to help-

and to reward them for this act of mercy. But no amount of money can purchase what is impossible for man. And this was a lot of money- 750 lbs of silver worth 200K and 150 lbs of gold worth 3.2 million today. Along with reems of cloth- and these did no good. Elisha is not a miracle worker for hire- and God's mercy cannot be bought!

II. Little People

But there are little people in our text as well- and as we will see- these little people are used by God to bring a message of hope! They have answers when kings and rulers are left speechless! Faith when everyone else has lost hope! The first little person is found in v. 2- a little girl who remains nameless. Now this little girl was a slave, she was carried off as a part of the spoils of war when the Syrians had invaded the tribes of Israel. In other words, she is a Hebrew- a Jew or and Israelite- who is living as a stranger in a foreign land. Forcefully removed from her own land and family, she is a maidservant in the house of Naaman- serving her mistress, Naaman's wife. This kind of reminds us of Daniel who was also taken away from his own people as he served in the kingdom of Babylon. But even though this little girl is a captive- she has not forgotten her home nor has she forgotten her God! She says to Naaman's wife in v. 3, there is a prophet who serves in Israeli- he would be able to cure of this disease. This little girl sees the God of Israel- specifically the prophet who serves in Samaria- as the only one who could help! Not only does she have pity on her master, she has faith in the power of the LORD God to save and make well! So this little person- despised- insignificant and nameless- is the only one who has hope for a change! So Naaman takes this idea to the king of Syria- and is sent to the King of Israel. And once in the land of Israel, he is sent to the house of Elisha! Finally, Naaman is going to meet someone who can help! This mighty man of God- this miracle working prophet who can raise the dead and multiply loaves! The one who can heal polluted water and poisonous soup! Well- not really. The fact is, Elisha does not go out- rather Elisha sends his servant. Instead of meeting Naaman in person, Elisha sends his messenger in v. 10. It is almost like Elisha is slighting this powerful man- he does not even come out to inspect all the gold and silver- does

not even show up to perform a miracle- he just sends a messenger. By the hand of his servant- no less! An unnamed messenger with a simple message- go and wash in the Jordan 7 times. Now this really bothers Naaman for a few reasons. First of all, who does Elisha think that he is dealing with? This is mighty Naaman- second in command over all Syria- a mighty warrior! Not some lowly servant, I am a mighty man! And he has come with an expectation- he wants to see something- some sign or wonder. Wave his hand over- recite some special incantation. At least stand before me and show some respect. But he only sends a messenger. And if Elisha would have required a great work- I would have traveled great distance- paid any expense to secure this healing. But only a message and a call to dip in the water. Surely there is no power in that! The fact is, it is human nature to make salvation harder than it really is! We like a challenge- anything that is simple cannot be significant! I mean- repent and believe- that is so simply! A child could do that! Go and wash- my servant could do that! Make it hard for me, at least! Let me prove my valor and my devotion! But the Word of the LORD is simply- faith like a child! Repent and believe! Go and wash and you will be clean! So we say to Naaman- is it possible that a message is more powerful than a sign? That good news can be received even if the author of that message is not physically present?

Does the physical absence of the prophet of God undermine the validity of His word and the power of His work? Or should the message of good news- the promise of healing- be received and believed even if the prophet is not physically present? I hope you are catching a deeper truth here! That even though the prophet is not physically present, his messengers still carry the good news! Good news that is to be believed- even though we do not now see the one who sent the message! The absence of the prophet does not diminish the power of His word! And there is one more little person in our text- actually a group of little people who do not miss this powerful word. In v. 13 after Naaman has stormed off, we have this group of servants who approach Naaman. My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you. A very important and powerful message- will you not listen and do it? Once again, it is the little people that see the truth before the proud catch on. These servants see the power and the promises- a great word has come from the LORD! Why harden your heart in anger- rather believe and obey! Wash and be clean!

These servants understand a deep truth, we must humble ourselves before the LORD! Instead of thinking that we know what is right- that we have all the answers- that we are strong enough to do it on our own. We need to become like children as we read in Mt. 18. Turn and become like children- humbling ourselves and believe! It is these that will be great in the kingdom of heaven. So after this gentle rebuke, Naaman humbles himself and obeys. Repents and believes- going down into the water to be washed 7 times. After this sevenfold cleaning, he will be made whole!

III. God's Purpose

Now that we have considered the contrast between the great mean and the little people- actually the servants in our passage, what remains is the purpose. Why is this miracle recorded, what is God doing here? Well, one of the lessons we learn again this week is that God keeps His word- and He reveals His presence and power through the works and words of the prophet. As Elisha clearly says in 5:8- that Naaman may know that there is a prophet in Israel. By healing Naaman, the LORD is making it clear that He is able to do what no foreign god can do! He can heal- even when the kings of the earth and the mighty men can do nothing! In this healing, the LORD is also confirming the faith of all these little people. As this little servant girl trusted- as this group of servants trusted and believed the powerful word spoken- so the LORD confirms that faith by healing Naaman. As we saw last week as well, the miracle proves the identify of the prophet- and the power of the God of the prophet! The servants put it best in 5:13- the great word has been spoken! The second major application we find is that God is proving the location of healing and deliverance. Location is very significant here! Note that Elisha said- so that he might know that there is a prophet in Israel. The "in Israel" part is very important. Note that when Elisha tells Naaman to wash, Naaman compares the water of his home country to that of Israel. The waters of Damascus- the rivers of Syria are way better than this little, dirty Jordan he says in v. 12. Are not the waters of Abana and Pharpar better than the waters of Israel? On the surface, the water of the Jordan is not very mighty- nor is it very clean. It would be like comparing the North Creek here in Lansing to the Colorado River. I would

not want to bathe in North Creek- you will not come out clean. So Naaman thinks- I could have washed in water back home. But what Naaman needs to learn, is that true cleansing cannot be found in Syria! The waters of Damascus cannot give you the cleansing you need! No, salvation is of the Jews as Jesus said in John 4. It is this very water- the water of the Jordan that will be used in the baptism of Jesus. And it is from Israel- from this nation- that the Savior of the world will come! And remember- that Naaman was a Gentile. Salvation for the Jews and the Gentiles- rich and poor- slave and free- great and lowly- salvation for all people will be found here and here alone! Not from Damascus- the healing water comes from the waters of Israel! Salvation is of the Jews because Jesus will be born a Jew- a Hebrew born in Bethlehem. He will be baptized in the Jordan as well- but instead of being baptized because He was dirty- Jesus is baptized to make us clean as we are baptized into His death and resurrection! So as we embrace Jesus with a heart of faith- His blood washes us and makes us clean- as fresh and clean as new snow! So Naaman, having obeyed and gone into the water 7 times, came out with skin like a child. All his impurities were washed away! Those who are washed in the blood of Christ- these also have all their sins washed away!

To conclude, our passage this morning has contrasted the great men with the lowly servants- proving that God can and does use the humble to shame the wise. It is only after Naaman humbles himself and obeys that he is made clean! As our theme stated, the water of Israel alone makes the dirty clean! It was not the waters of Damascus- it was not the gods of Syria that would save! No, salvation is of the Jews- healing comes by the hand of Israel's God alone! As we now come to the Table of the Lord, let us embrace this promised Savior who has come from the Jews to save both Jew and Gentile! Embrace God's word- trusting in His appointed fountain by which cleansing from your sins is found! His blood washes away our sins and is our drink unto eternal life! His body true food that nourishes the soul! As the Jordan's water cleansed Naaman's flesh, trust in the blood of Jesus which was shed for the complete forgiveness of all your sins!