Small Group Notes for the Week of Sept. 19, 2021

**2 Kings 5:1-14**

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. 2 Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. 3 She said to her mistress, “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” 4 So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. 5 And the king of Aram said, “Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.”

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” 9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.” 11 But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “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! 12 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?” He turned and went away in a rage. 13 But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 14 So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

**General Questions:**

1. What stood out to you in the sermon?

2. What is something new you didn’t know before?

3. Is there a question that the sermon prompted for/in you?

4. How do you feel called to respond to the sermon?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Read 2 Kings 5 together as a small group. Make a list of all the characters in this chapter. Who are they? Healing seems to be a communal process with many people involved in the healing of Naaman. What role does each one play in Naaman’s healing journey? Which character do you resonate with the most and why? Who are the ones involved in your healing journey? Share your answers.
2. What does it mean for you to let your guard down? In order to build up any authentic community, it’s important for us to let our guards down and be vulnerable to one another. Brene Brown defines vulnerability as the “courage to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart.” What does your story look like and sound like?
3. Here’s an interesting commentary on Naaman:

*Naaman commanded the army of Aram (Syria) and was himself a “mighty warrior,” a man of both physical strength and personal charisma. But he was a leper, a condition that made him ceremonially unclean and socially isolated, though it is possible that his high social status blunted the social ostracism that accompanied the disease. The story underlines Naaman’s exalted status in several ways. The king of Aram so esteems him that he endangers a fragile truce with Israel so that Naaman might seek healing. Naaman controls great wealth. He brings with him about 1,000 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten suits of clothing — huge treasure! And he comes with an entourage consisting of “horses and chariots,” a procession of power. The man who rolls up in front of Elisha’s house that afternoon, horses tossing their heads, chariots gleaming, boxes of silver and gold ready to buy a cure, is accustomed to bows of honor and unquestioning obedience. If there is a prophet in Israel powerful enough to heal him, Naaman definitely has the means to persuade that prophet. He assumes that what he needs he will get.*

*Such is the way of the world, but the ways of the God of Israel run counter to this. The humble and unlikely channels of God’s power are hinted at from the beginning of the story. Naaman learns how he might be healed from a humble source, a young Israelite girl, a powerless slave. To his credit, he values the word of the servant girl passed on through his wife. This is a hopeful sign. The true test of Naaman’s openness to the humble and humbling ways of the LORD is the scene in front of Elisha’s house. The prophet dishonors the great man at his door. He does not show himself; instead he sends a messenger. And the message offers further humiliation for Naaman. No special rite of healing will be performed. The prophet will not meet with him at all. “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times.” Elisha sends Naaman off to take a self-serve, third-rate-river cure. Outrageous! Furious, he slams the chariot door and drives off. Perhaps it is only Naaman’s desperation for a cure that keeps him from burning down the prophet’s house.*

*Again, it is the courage of servants that saves Naaman. What temerity they have to confront their master and reason with him! And we see a second time that Naaman has the grace of being able to hear advice from outside the bubble of his privilege. He swallows his pride and treks down the long, steep road to the Jordan valley. He “went down.” The Hebrew verb is from the same stem as the name Jordan, a name meaning simply “descender.” The narrator compresses the healing process into the space of a single verse. The scene at the lowly Jordan, more of a stream than a river, less glorious by human standards than the rivers of Damascus, is the nadir of Naaman’s humiliation. While his entourage watches, he dips himself seven times in the humble Jordan. The specified number of immersions recalls the priestly rituals of cleansing specified in Leviticus 14. And then he is clean (tehar, which denotes ritual purity). His skin is like that of a young boy (na‘ar, which can, significantly, also mean ‘servant’).*

*Not only Naaman’s skin but his very self is remade. Like the tenth leper healed by Jesus, Naaman returns (shuv, which can also mean ‘repent’) to give thanks. He comes and stands before the prophet, a phrase that denotes the posture of a supplicant. He confesses his new-found faith in the God of Israel, the only true God, and offers Elisha the presents he has brought. Now the wealth he has brought is not an incentive, but truly an offering. Elisha makes it clear that the power of God is not for sale. It is a gift, a grace. The genuine transformation of Naaman’s religious world is made clear in his request for sacred soil on which to worship the LORD back home, and this is further underlined by his plea for leniency when he is required to attend his king in the temple of Rimmon. “Go in peace,” says Elisha, which must mean leniency is granted. He returns home a different man, a clean man with loads of foreign dirt on which to worship the true God.*

Have you ever felt dishonored or overlooked? How did you react? Who or what is your foundation of your identity? How is that being challenged these days?

1. Share your own stories of healing. Share your prayer requests with each other and pray for one another.