

“It Doesn’t Make Sense.”

**Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 7/1/2018
At Crossroads United Methodist Church
Waunakee, WI**

Scripture:

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2 Kings 5:13-14

But his officers tried to reason with him and said, “If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn’t you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply to go and wash and be cured!” So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the prophet had told him to. And his flesh became as healthy as a little child’s, and he was healed!

Jeremiah 17:7-8

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”



Today I want to take a very in depth look at our friend Naaman from 2 Kings as we listen to how naaman’s story impacts our story. Lurene shared a a few verses of the story where we find Naaman following Elisha the prophets advice by dunking himself 7 times in the Jordan and becoming cured.

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If you'd like to turn with me to 2 Kings, chapter 5, I'll lead you through the story. Beginning at chapter 5, we find out that Naaman is the highly regarded commander of the Syrian army. He is a good man, and he is greatly respected.



We know a bit more about him because of his name. The Hebrew verb naem, means to be delightful, pleasant, beautiful.” It has the idea of “gracious” or “well formed.” Because of the significance of names in Scripture, this tells us something about this man. His name suggests he as a gracious and delightful man who was undoubtedly handsome...at least before the leprosy.



You probably already have an idea of what leprosy is. We remember dozens of stories in the bible about people in leper colonies.

People retreated to these colonies because there was no cure for leprosy and it was contagious. That's pretty much all they knew about the disease.

While studying for this message, I learned something about leprosy. I thought it was an infectious skin disease when in fact, it is a disease of the nervous system caused by a

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bacterium. It affects the nerves, the skin, and the joints. Basically, colder areas away from our bodies like ears, fingers, toes, nose, etc...these things lose sensation, so they are more prone to injury. Eventually the injury becomes infected and the tissue festers and rots away.

The disease still exists today. It’s transmitted by sneezing or coughing. It’s now known as Hansen’s disease and there are about 200 cases a year just in the US. But now we know more about it than back then, and we have cures that work.

But, in 800 BC, it meant losing everything dear to you. Your job, your mobility, your social circle, your self esteem, your dreams of the future, your family and even your own flesh.



The Syrians in those days had attacked the Israelites, and captured a young girl who became the servant of Naaman’s wife. The girl was a believer in the one true God in a place where the Jewish God was not recognized. She mentioned that if Naaman went to Israel to the prophet of the most High God, he could be healed of his leprosy.

For a while, Naaman poo poos the idea. He knows that leprosy can’t be cured. He knows that he has a brief amount of time to be with his family and a brief amount of time to do important things for the king. He’s a man with limited time. And above all, he’s practical, not foolish.

But, the servant girl and others keep working on Naaman. And the girl’s faith in God is convincing. So, Naaman saddles up, brings a treasure trove of gifts and travels to see Elisha.



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When Naaman arrives with horses and chariots, Elisha sends a messenger, saying, “Go and wash in Jordan 7 times, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you will be clean.”

So... did you catch that? Naaman doesn’t even get to meet Elisha! WHAT?!??

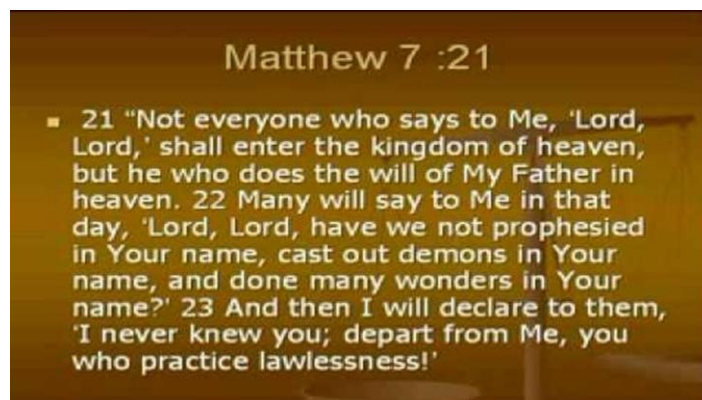
This makes absolutely NO SENSE! And... Naaman was PO’d! Here he had taken a chance on something that he knew wasn’t going to work anyway, and instead of getting at least something, his gifts were rejected and he was told to do something ridiculous.

He was outraged. He screamed back at the place where Elisha stood in the doorway, “Jordan River????!!!! Are you kidding me? The Abana, the Pharpar and the rivers of Damascus are closer to me and far cleaner than the Jordan. What a joke!”



Do you recognize how Naaman must be feeling? Naaman’s rage is a symptom of his lack of humility.

Is this us sometimes? We know what God is supposed to do and how he’s supposed to do it. We say, God, listen up... My will be done. I know what’s best for myself and the situations around me. Don’t you dare give me something that makes no sense! And maybe, we are so egotistical that we’d rather die than succumb to a message from God that makes no sense.



Matthew 7:21-23

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do

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many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Naaman returns home and brushes off all this Elisha nonsense. But... Naaman’s servants still had faith. They reminded him that if he had been asked to do some hard or great thing he probably would have done it.

Was the simplicity in God’s commandment insulting?



The good news is that Naaman is finally convinced to dip himself in the Jordan. The faith of those around him was working on him. And the scripture concludes that Naaman came up out of the water on the 7th time and his skin was like new.

These people in Naaman’s life didn’t give up on him. Even when he was angry. They remained steadfast to show Naaman what God can do... even and especially if it doesn’t make sense.

Is this something we can do with those around us? Can we remain steadfast, humbling ourselves and letting God lead us?

So... what was it that cured Naaman? Was the the magical waters of the Jordan river?No. God cured Naaman. However, God would not cleanse him until Naaman first obeyed Gods Will. Yes, this story has that delicious moment of suspense... Would Naaman give God his faith, and risk looking ridiculous or do something that made absolutely no sense simply because God asked him to? Remember, Naaman is a sensible man. He makes important decisions based on strategy and maps.

In these kinds of ways, The Holy Spirit is unpredictable. God can speak to our hearts and ask us to do something that makes no sense whatsoever. And the question to us Is this: Are we willing to listen for God’s leading in our lives. And what if the answer doesn’t make sense?

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Proverbs 3:5-6 Living Bible (TLB)

4-5 If you want favor with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgment and common sense, **then trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself.** In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success. And it is then that you will be lifted up by God's leading in your life. It is then that healing and true living can begin. Amen