

Sermon followed by Service

August 13, 2023

2 Kings 5:

You've heard it: "If I ever win the lottery ...". Sometimes I like to imagine winning the lottery. It would be a miracle because I don't ever play, but sometimes I like to imagine winning the lottery. Digging into the pie and cutting out the first piece, a nice, big piece for God and his work; then cutting out another big piece for later; then eating a bit here and there; sharing a piece here and sharing a piece there. Sometimes I like to imagine winning the lottery, but that's all fantasy, fantasy that can dangerously brew and stew into a nasty bitter case of discontent. We see some of that in our lesson today. In our lesson, Elisha was this close to taking home the jackpot as a gift from Naaman.

You might remember Naaman from the last two weeks. As commander of the king's army, not Israel but Aram, Naaman was powerful and rich. Even better, Naaman had his health. And best of all, Naaman was going home to live with the LORD. You may remember that last week Naaman showed up at Elisha's door with 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, 10 sets of new clothes, and leprosy. Elisha then sent him to wash seven times in the Jordan River, and Naaman was healed. Even better, it wasn't just Naaman's skin that was changed; Naaman's heart and mind were changed. Now he believed and looked to the LORD as the only true God.

As Naaman was about to go back home, he stopped to thank Elisha. He stopped by with his horses and chariots and 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of clothes. **“Please accept a gift from your servant.”** Imagine what a million, or two million, or five million dollars could have meant for Elisha and his ministry. He’d be set. And not just him. He’d be able to make sure the schools of the prophets were set. But Elisha refused: **“As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.”** And Elisha didn’t refuse with a “wink-wink” hoping Naaman would offer again. No, when Naaman insisted, Elisha insisted all the more, he would not accept a thing from Naaman.

Why not? We don’t have some command from God against giving or accepting “thank you” gifts. In fact, we have a plate for “thank you” gifts right up here. And we have the words of Paul: **“In view of God’s mercy, offer yourself as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.”**

So why not accept Naaman’s gift? Elisha doesn’t tell us, but there’s no reason to think it was pride or prejudice on Elisha’s part that he didn’t want to have anything to do with Naaman’s stuff. Instead, Elisha is thinking with the heart of a true pastor, or better, he’s thinking with the heart of Jesus. Instead of thinking of the money for himself for house and home and vacations and retirement; instead of thinking about the money for his ministry, how many prophets could he support for how many years; instead of thinking how the money could make his life easier, and how the money could advance his ministry, instead of thinking about the money, Elisha is thinking as a servant of the LORD for the

glory of God and the good of his people. What that means is instead of thinking about the good of the gift, Elisha is thinking about the good of the giver. Think back, why did Naaman bring his horses and chariots and gold and silver? To impress and get what he wanted. If Elisha accepted Naaman's gift, what impression might he give? That money talks, that money and gifts earn special treatment from Elisha and his LORD. That God isn't a gracious giver but a businessman buying and selling his favor. On the other hand, think ahead, when Naaman went home healed and with all his silver and gold, when people asked how he was healed and why he was healed, Naaman could show and tell - the LORD's grace and favor aren't bought and sold, the LORD's grace and favor are free.

We see that with Jesus. **“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.”** Think about it. Jesus, the Son of God, with all the riches and comfort of heaven, give it up for the curse of the cross, hanging there with nothing to hold on to but the promise of heaven with you. So, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were dead to God, he made us alive. When we were at war against God, he made us to be his family and friends. When we had nothing to offer, he offered himself for us. Why? Certainly not to get from us. Every thing we have, everything we give him, we have from him. He doesn't need us to give to him; he doesn't need our “thank you” gifts. The whole world is his and everything in it. He didn't make us alive to get from us; he didn't make us to be his family and friends to get from us. He made us alive and brings us close as family and friends to share

his heart with us, and through us. When Jesus sent his disciples out, he told them: “**Freely you have received, freely give.**” God has made us alive; he brings us close as family and friends, so that in Jesus and with Jesus, freely we receive God’s love and freely we share God’s love.

In our lesson, Elisha was showing the LORD to be a God of free grace; Elisha was showing Naaman to be an example of free grace; and Elisha was showing what a gracious heart is willing to give up for the glory of God and the good of his people.

But it’s not easy to leave free money on the table. Elisha had a servant named Gehazi, and Gehazi thought his master to be a sap, a fool for not taking what he could get. So Gehazi says to himself: “**As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.**” Makes me think of Paul: “Flee, run away from the love of money; chase, run after righteousness and godliness.” But that’s not normal or natural. So Gehazi runs after Naaman; he runs after Naaman’s money. He lies to Naaman, and when he gets back, he lies to Elisha. In between, he lies to himself: “I know how I can get ahead. I now how I can take care of myself. And it won’t really cost anybody anything.” He lies to himself: “I can get away with this. No one will know.” What does that thinking sound like? The thinking of a liar and a cheat; the thinking of a thief; for that matter, the thinking of someone cheap with his or her offerings.

But Elisha did know because God did know. What happens next can be a bit unsettling. Gehazi is stricken with Naaman's leprosy. I think of Herod the Great who had the babies of Bethlehem killed. When we hear how he died in torment, we might think: "He got what he had coming," and we don't hear any real argument inside. Or later, the Herod who had James killed. When he was struck down and died in torment, we might think: "He got what he had coming," and we don't hear any real argument inside. But when Gehazi is struck with leprosy, there may be a part of us that thinks, "He got what he had coming," but I wonder if there is another part of us that thinks it was too harsh. Why? Perhaps because it can be easy for us to share the sin of Gehazi, discontented with what God gives us - "is this all I get when they have so much more?!" Or perhaps because it can be easy for us to share the sin of Gehazi and to lie to ourselves - pretending to stand with God while we're chasing after the world. But God knows. God knows what we think. God sees through our lies and our pretending. God knows. And it was about time that Gehazi knew it too.

Makes me wonder: Did Gehazi become too comfortable with free grace? Or did he just get too comfortable thinking about his own comfort? However Gehazi was too comfortable, God took away his comfort. We might wonder: "When will it be my turn? How much longer before God puts a stop to my pretending to walk with him? How much longer can I get away with my pretending before he shows me his judgment?" Or, instead of using free grace as a license to sin, we can let free grace move us to confess and repent. We can let free grace move us to start new like Naaman. Like Naaman, we can live changed;

we can live for the Lord who gives us life; we can live for the Lord who brings us close as family and friends. We can live for the Lord who makes us rich.

With Jesus, we have better than a winning lotto ticket. With Jesus, all our Gehazi moments, all our Gehazi lies, all our Gehazi plotting and pretending, with Jesus all our debt for all our Gehazi guilt is wiped out, forgiven. Instead, of standing guilty before God, owing God, we get to stand before God forgiven, forgiven with a promise. With Jesus, you are the children and heirs of God. With Jesus, you're richer than leprous Naaman with his horses and chariots and gold and silver and whatnot. With Jesus, you have the Creator and ruler of the universe to care for you today. With Jesus, you have his home; you have heaven as your home forever. Better than winning the lottery, with Jesus, like Elisha and Naaman, we freely share in God's grace. And with Jesus, like Elisha and Naaman, we freely share out God's grace - like winners! Amen.

August 12 & 13, 2023

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... "Money Talks" and gets people into a whole lot of trouble.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we hear a better promise than money can offer.

OPENING HYMN

"Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings"

Hymn 752

Gracious God, you send great blessings new each morning all our days.
For your mercies never ending, for your love we offer praise.

Refrain

Lord, we pray that we, your people who your gifts unnumbered claim,
through the sharing of your blessings may bring glory to your name.

By your Word you formed creation filled with creatures large and small;
as we tend that endless treasure may our care encircle all. *Refrain*

In his earthly life, our Savior knew the care of faithful friends;
may our deeds of dedication offer love that never ends. *Refrain*

Heav'nly Father, may our caring bear the imprint of your grace;
with the Son and Holy Spirit, praise be yours in ev'ry place! *Refrain*

OPENING SENTENCES

Musical notation for the first opening sentence: "O Lord, o-pen my lips." The notation is on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter rest, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, and a quarter note G5. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked above the notes. The lyrics "O Lord, o-pen my lips." are written below the staff.

Musical notation for the second opening sentence: "And my mouth shall de - clare your praise." The notation is on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, and a quarter note G5. The lyrics "And my mouth shall de - clare your praise." are written below the staff.



Hasten to save me, O God.



O Lord, come quickly to help me.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: Amen.



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.



You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
You are the God whom we call our own,



you made the seas and the dry land.
we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in your bountiful goodness, keep us safe from every evil of body and soul. Make us ready, with cheerful hearts, to do whatever pleases you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

2 Kings 5:14-27 (select)

So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel."

"So please accept a gift from your servant."

The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused...

After Naaman had traveled some distance, 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."

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.

"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 of silver and two sets of clothing.'"

"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. 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.

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.

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? 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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN

“My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone”

Hymn 818

My soul finds rest in God alone, my rock and my salvation;
a fortress strong against my foes, and I will not be shaken.
Though lips may bless and hearts may curse,
and lies like arrows pierce me,
I’ll fix my heart on righteousness, I’ll look to him who hears me.

Refrain

O praise him, hallelujah, my delight and my reward;
everlasting, never failing, my Redeemer, my God.

Find rest, my soul, in God alone amid the world’s temptations;
when evil seeks to take a hold, I’ll cling to my salvation.
Though riches come and riches go, don’t set your heart upon them;
the fields of hope in which I sow are harvested in heaven.

I’ll set my gaze on God alone and trust in him completely;
with ev’ry day pour out my soul, and he will prove his mercy.
Though life is but a fleeting breath, a sigh too brief to measure,
my king has crushed the curse of death and I am his forever. *Refrain*

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia! Freely you have received, freely give. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 19:16–30

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

“Which ones?” he inquired.

Jesus replied, “ ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

"My Worth Is Not in What I Own"

Hymn 753

My worth is not in what I own, not in the strength of flesh and bone,
but in the costly wounds of love at the cross.

My worth is not in skill or name, in win or lose, in pride or shame,
but in the blood of Christ that flowed at the cross.

Refrain

I rejoice in my Redeemer — greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul.
I will trust in him, no other; my soul is satisfied in him alone.

As summer flow'rs we fade and die; fame, youth, and beauty hurry by.
But life eternal calls to us at the cross.

I will not boast in wealth or might, or human wisdom's fleeting light.
But I will boast in knowing Christ at the cross.

Refrain

I rejoice in my Redeemer — greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul.
I will trust in him, no other; my soul is satisfied in him alone.

Two wonders here that I confess: my worth and my unworthiness.
My value fixed — my ransom paid at the cross. *Refrain*

SERMON

HYMN

"Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us"
Hymn 767

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice;
and with that have freely given blessings countless as the sand
to th' unthankful and the evil with your own unsparing hand.

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you gladly, freely, of your own.
With the sunshine of your goodness melt our thankless hearts of stone
till our cold and selfish natures, warmed by you, at length believe
that more happy and more blessed 'tis to give than to receive.

Wondrous honor you have given to our humblest charity
in your own mysterious sentence, "You have done it all for me."
Can it be, O gracious Master, that you need what we can do,
saying by your poor and needy, "Give as I have giv'n to you"?

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice.
Give us faith to trust you boldly, hope, to stay our souls on you;
but, oh, best of all your graces, with your love our love renew.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord, our God, you are wise and powerful, good and gracious. Your mercies are new every morning. Each day you open your hand and provide for the needs of your children on earth.

C: We praise you for every grace and blessing.

M: Strengthen your Church in all the world. Let your comforting message of salvation in Christ Jesus be proclaimed to troubled souls everywhere.

C: Use our ministries and offerings to extend your healing and your hope.

M: We bring you our requests for the various structures of our society. Bless our national, state (provincial), and local governments.

C: Grant us civil servants who are worthy of honor and respect.

M: Grant prosperity to our businesses and industries. Give employers a sense of fairness toward their workers, and employees a feeling of joy and pride in their workmanship.

C: Help us find satisfaction in all work well done.

M: Invigorate the schools of our land. Give success to every effort that helps students read, think, and communicate in ways that will promote an informed and responsible citizenry. Arouse curious minds to discover the wonders of your created order.

C: Give us teachers and students who pursue excellence.

M: Strengthen the families of our country. Give fathers and mothers a renewed commitment to be good parents. Give children and young people the wisdom to regard their parents as your representatives.

C: Lead us to love one another as you have loved us.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, we pray boldly as Jesus taught, with the confidence that you will hear and with the faith that you will respond for our welfare.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



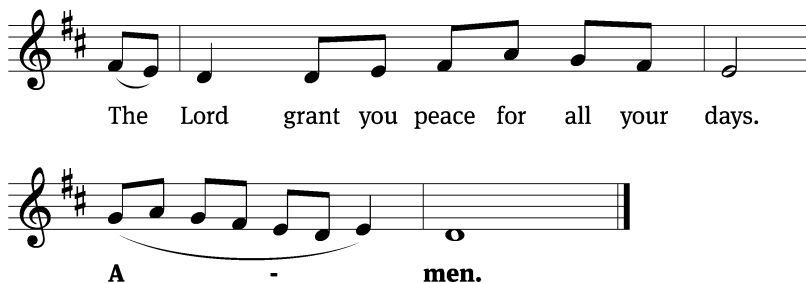
A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



CLOSING HYMN

“All Depends on Our Possessing”

Hymn 807 vs. 1, 3, 5, & 6

All depends on our possessing God’s abundant grace and blessing,
 though all earthly wealth depart. They who trust with faith unshaken
 in their God are not forsaken and will keep a dauntless heart.

Many spend their lives in fretting over trifles and in getting
 things that have no solid ground. I shall strive to win a treasure
 that will bring me lasting pleasure and that now is seldom found.

Well he knows what best to grant me; all the longing hopes that haunt me,
 joy and sorrow, have their day. I shall doubt his wisdom never;
 as God wills, so be it ever; I commit to him my way.

If my days on earth he lengthen, he my weary soul will strengthen;
 all my trust in him I place. Earthly wealth is not abiding,
 like a stream away is gliding; safe I anchor in his grace.

OFFERING

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GRADES 1-8

ORIENTATION NIGHT



AUGUST 10TH AND 15TH



Please join the teachers of grades 1-8 as we ring in the new school year with orientation presentations. Each grade will have a specific time to meet with their teacher as a group in their classrooms.



- Grades 1-2 will meet with Mrs. Rockwell at 5:00.
- Grades 3-4 will meet with Ms. Behl at 5:30.
- Grades 5-6 will meet with Ms. Lindemann at 6:00.
- Grades 7-8 will meet with Mr. Wintrone at 6:30.



In between meetings, please join fellow St. John families downstairs in the fellowship hall for ice cream presented by the Parent-Teacher Partnership (PTP) group.

If you are not in a meeting with a teacher, please make sure your children stay under your watchful eye.

