

Sermon followed by Service

August 6, 2023

2 Kings 5:4-15

It's August. July has come and gone. The first July, the only July in who knows how many years, I can remember not getting together with my family and playing cards, Schafkopf, Sheepshead. Maybe that's why our lesson has me thinking cards. Now I'm going to ask you a favor: don't do a Lisa. It seems whenever I mention Sheepshead, it's like Lisa puts her hands over her ears, "Don't make me play Sheepshead, don't make me think Sheepshead; I want nothing to do with Sheepshead." I promise that I won't make you play Sheepshead, and I won't ask you to think very much Sheepshead. Just a couple thoughts. In Sheepshead, when we start a new hand, we don't know our partners; we might know someone who isn't our partner, but we don't know our partners - and that can lead to trouble. Also in Sheepshead, if you think you have power cards, you play your power cards to get what you want. And if you have enough power cards, you think you can dictate the way the game is played. Sounds a bit like how the world plays life, doesn't it?

So in our lesson, we have Naaman. Naaman is a somebody, a powerful somebody. He's commander of the king's army; he's a winner; and so he's in tight with his king. But he has leprosy. Leprosy has been in the news this past week; leprosy is growing; more and more cases of leprosy are being found in Florida. Maybe you've seen the pictures - deformed hands, faces, wasting away. Not a disease we want. Even if Naaman's form of leprosy wasn't what we see in the pictures, it

was a skin disease that threatened his life as he knew it. So when Naaman hears there is someone who can cure him, he wants in. Naaman is so desperate for a cure, that when he hears his wife's servant girl says there is some prophet who can cure him, he acts on the word of a servant girl. So he tells his king. I don't know. Did Naaman tell his king to get the king and his power in on his plan? Did Naaman tell his king just to make sure he, Naaman, didn't get in trouble for talking with the enemy? Did Naaman tell his king just because they were friends? I don't know. We do know this - Naaman told his king, and the king makes a partner move.

The king of Aram sends a letter to the king of Israel. Was it a letter asking for a favor? The king of Israel didn't think so. When the bully on the block asks a favor, he's not really "asking," is he? So the king of Israel tears his clothes in terror: "The king of Aram is picking a fight with me!" Why was the king of Israel so upset? He wasn't playing with a full hand. He forgot his God-card; he didn't bother to pick up his God-card. He wasn't playing with his full hand so all he saw was how weak his hand was. Or to look at it another way, the king of Israel forgot - he didn't bother to think about - who his partner was. The king of Israel thought he had to play alone when - with a little bit of trust - he could have had the strongest player at the table as his partner.

How often don't we do that? How often don't we forget our God card? Or let our God card get lost in our hand? How often don't we get distracted and just leave our God card sitting on the table? We get busy, distracted, careless; we lose sight of

our God card; and we're left staring at a weak hand - wondering, worrying: "What am I going to do? How am I going to make it?" Or better, instead of thinking of God as a card we play, how often don't we forget that we have God as our partner, our Father, our Savior, our Lord? And we're left looking at ourselves: "What am I going to do? How am I going to make it?"

Naaman knew how he was going to make it. He was a winner, with the power of a winner, with the backing of a winner. He was a powerful man; he knew it, and he showed it. He showed up at Elisha's doorstep with his retinue, his horses and chariots and servants, and 750 pounds of silver, perhaps 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of new clothes. Naaman made it clear; it would be good for Elisha to help him. Yes, Naaman knew his cards - his power and riches. He knew his partners, his king back home ready to back him up, Israel's king afraid and eager to help. Naaman knew his cards and his partners and he thought he knew how to play them to get what he wanted.

The problem was he didn't know what card he was missing, he didn't know what partner he was missing. It seems Naaman figured that with his cards and partners, with his power and riches, God should just fall into line for him. Naaman is so full of himself that he thinks he gets to set the rules for God, that he gets to tell God how to play. So typical, so human, isn't it?

God isn't so interested in playing by our rules. God isn't so interested in having us tell him how he should do what we want. We see all that in our lesson. Naaman shows up at Elisha's doorstep with all his greatness. And what does Elisha do? As God's prophet, he doesn't feed into Naaman's misplaced sense of

self; he doesn't play Naaman's game. Instead Elisha sends a messenger to Naaman telling Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River. We think of the Jordan River as special because of Joshua and Jesus. As far as rivers go, the Jordan isn't and wasn't all that impressive.

So when Naaman sees how he is treated by Elisha, when he hears what Elisha tells him to do, Naaman's sense of self is offended. He's angry. Elisha wasn't doing what Naaman thought he should do. The LORD wasn't doing what Naaman thought the LORD should do. Naaman expected better for himself; he thought he could do better for himself. Naaman's sense of self was offended and he went off in a rage.

How typical, how human, not so? How typical, how human, to get ticked off at God when God doesn't do things our way. It doesn't seem to matter whether we're playing with what we think is a strong hand, like Naaman, or whether we're playing with a weak hand, when God doesn't do what we think he should do, when God doesn't do things our way - it's so easy so see our sense of self offended and to get angry at God because our self knows better than God and deserves better from God. How many people turn against God because God doesn't do what they think he should do? And what does it get them? Perhaps a self-satisfied sense of self today, but then a self kicking its self forever in hell. We know that, and yet, how often don't we turn against God because God doesn't do what we think he should do?

Thankfully, God blessed Naaman with caring hearts and cooler heads. Naaman got off his high horse; he was washed and

cured. That would be a good ending for a story, but Naaman was blessed with better. Not only was his skin changed, his heart and mind was changed. He went home trusting in the LORD of Elisha - **“there is no God in all the world except in Israel.”**

For some people, some days, it is so easy to go through life thinking they have a strong hand, thinking they have what they need without God, and if there is a god, he should nicely line up with what they want. For some people, some days, it is so easy to go through life thinking they have a weak hand, forgetting the God they could have in their hand and as their partner. And then - whether we think we have a strong hand or a weak hand - when life doesn't go the way we want, when God doesn't do things the way we think he should, it is so easy to let our sense of self turn us against God - because if we think our self right, we must be right. Oh, what trouble we can get ourselves into by relying on self. Oh, what trouble we can leave ourselves stuck in by relying on self.

But look at the cards we get to hold in our hands; look at the partners we get to have in life. Better than the king of Aram or the king of Israel, we have the King of Kings. We have the friend of sinners and the healer of the hurting to turn to. We have the ruler of the universe to back us up. He doesn't just offer us a water washing to make our skin clean and clear. He offers us a washing with water and his Word, a washing that can clear our conscience and cure our twisted sense of self, even better, a washing that clears our record before God, presenting you as clean and clear, holy and right, before God.

How can Baptism do that for us? Baptism isn't just a washing with water, it is a washing of water with the Word of God, a washing filled with the promise of God, a promise made real and powerful by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the cross Jesus paid for our sin; for all the times we played life with a weak hand thinking we had no god to help us, Jesus paid up and made up for us! For all the times we played life thinking we had a strong hand and could go alone and without God, Jesus paid up and made up for us! For all the times we thought our offended sense of self was more important than God, Jesus paid up and made up for us! By water and the Word, in Jesus' death and his resurrection, you are washed and clean, forgiven and right by God.

Forgiven and right with God, we don't ever need to think we have to go alone with a weak hand. Forgiven and right with God, why would we ever think it good to go it alone without God, even with a strong hand? Forgiven and right with God, we have the strongest card, the strongest partner; we have God in our hand, and God as our partner. Thank you, LORD! Amen.

August 5 & 6, 2023

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... so many think of God and his ways with wonder and scoffing bewilderment - "Really?! What makes you think that was a good idea?"

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we think of God and his ways with praising amazement - "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ... To him be the glory forever! Amen." Romans 11:33-36

OPENING HYMN

"Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him"

Hymn 619

Praise the Almighty; my soul, adore him! Yes, I will laud him until death.
With songs and anthems I'll come before him
as long as he allows me breath.
From him my life and all things came; bless, O my soul, his holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Penitent sinners, for mercy crying, pardon and peace from him obtain;
ever the wants of the poor supplying, their faithful God he will remain.
He helps his children in distress, the widows and the fatherless.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Trust not in princes, they are but mortal;
earthborn they are and soon decay.
Vain are their counsels at life's last portal
when the dark grave will claim its prey.
Since, then, no one can help afford, trust only Christ, our God and Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise, all you people, the name so holy
of him who does such wondrous things!
All that has being, to praise him solely, with happy heart its amen sings!
Children of God, with angel host praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Alleluia, alleluia!

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (SUNG)

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST (SUNG)

CW 176

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, look with mercy on us in all our dangers and needs, and stretch out the right hand of your majesty to help and defend us; 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 5:1-19

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram.

He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!" 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.

"If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this."

"Go in peace," Elisha said.

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

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 121D

Refrain



Keep me, keep me as the ap - ple of your eye.



Hide me, hide me in the shad-ow of your wings.



I lift up my eyes to the / mountains—
 where does my help / come from?
 My help comes / from the LORD,
 the maker of heav- / en and earth.
 He will not let your / foot slip—
 he who watches over you will not / slumber;
 indeed, he who watches over / Israel
 will neither slum- / ber nor sleep. *Refrain*

The LORD watches / over you—
 the LORD is your shade at / your right hand;
 the sun will not harm / you by day,
 nor the / moon by night.
 The LORD will keep you / from all harm—
 he will watch o- / ver your life;
 the LORD will watch over your coming and / going
 both now and for- / evermore.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
 and to the Holy / Spirit,
 as it was in the be- / ginning,
 is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matthew 28:20

Alleluia. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 8:1–13

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

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

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

Hymn 517

Praise the one who breaks the darkness with a liberating light;
praise the one who frees the pris'ners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the gospel, healing ev'ry dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands with the Father's word of peace.

Praise the one who blessed the children with a strong, yet gentle, word;
praise the one who drove out demons with the piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water to the desert's burning sand;
from this well comes living water, quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

Let us praise the Word incarnate, Christ, who suffered in our place;
Jesus died and rose victorious that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness, seeing what our God has done;
let us praise the true Redeemer, praise the one who makes us one.

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

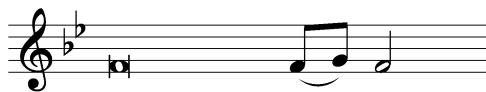
LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)



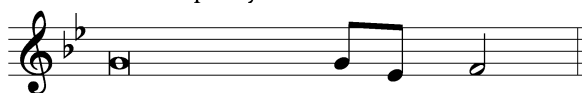
The Lord be with you.



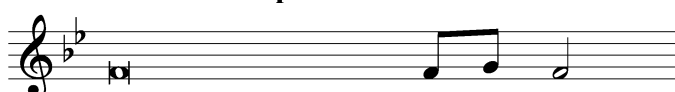
And al - so with you.



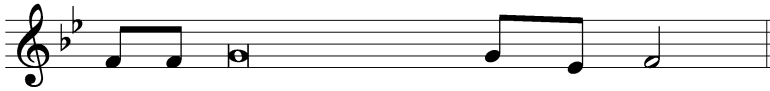
Lift up your hearts.



We lift them up to the Lord.



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD (SUNG)

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"I Lay My Sins on Jesus"

Hymn 798

I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God;
he bears them all and frees us from the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus to wash my crimson stains
white in his blood most precious till not a spot remains.

I lay my wants on Jesus, all fullness dwells in him;
he heals all my diseases, my soul he does redeem.
I lay my griefs on Jesus, my burdens and my cares;
he from them all releases, he all my sorrows shares.

I rest my soul on Jesus, this weary soul of mine;
his right hand me embraces, I in his arms recline.
I love the name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ, the Lord;
like fragrance on the breezes his name abroad is poured.

I long to be like Jesus, meek, loving, lowly, mild;
I long to be like Jesus, the Father's holy child.
I long to be with Jesus amid the heav'nly throng,
to sing with saints his praises, to learn the angels' song.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you
will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus"

Hymn 816

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus, trusting only you;
trusting you for full salvation, free and true.

I am trusting you for pardon; at your feet I bow,
for your grace and tender mercy trusting now.

I am trusting you for cleansing in the crimson flood;
trusting you to make me holy by your blood.

I am trusting you to guide me; you alone shall lead,
ev'ry day and hour supplying all my need.

I am trusting you for power; you can never fail.
Words which you yourself shall give me must prevail.

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus; never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever and for all.

OFFERING

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GRADES 1-8

ORIENTATION NIGHT



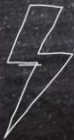
AUGUST 10TH AND 15TH



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.

