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### Put Your Pride Aside 2 Kings 5:1-14

**5** 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 a skin disease**. **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 skin disease." **4** So Naaman<sup>[a]</sup> 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 skin disease." **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 skin disease? 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 skin disease! **12** Are not Abana<sup>[b]</sup> 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.*

Today we remember the power of ***freedom, sacrifice, and courage***, as we prepare for Independence Day tomorrow.

In Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, there is a ***Tomb of the Unknown Soldier***, where the remains of three unknown soldiers are buried. The monument is in honor of ***ALL those who gave their lives*** for freedom, even when their remains were not identified. They may be Unknown, but they are not forgotten.

It's a reminder that Unknown people are ***often the brave ones among us. Heroes are often unknown and unnamed.***

Do you know any ***unsung heroes in your life?*** I sure do. I got to spend time with one while on vacation, With my Aunt Judy—who is a light of service and faith. Always thinking of others. She doesn't have a lot of money, or education, no power or prestige, But she does have a huge heart of gold, and the willingness to serve and help anyone, with anything.

People like her are not famous, or proud, they are ***just humble servants.*** We often find them in the body of Christ, don't we?

Our story today ***seems to be about Naaman's healing***, But it's ALSO about the Unknown people-- The humble people, and their courage and sacrifice. The people without power, or pride, or prestige, Those with only a servant's heart.

This is also a story about the ***LIMITS of power and pride.*** Naaman is a strong, powerful commander for the King of Aram, a man of high favor, because God had given him victory over Israel. He is described as ***a mighty warrior.***

But all his power and pride **cannot protect him from a disability**.  
 He has **leprosy**—the Hebrew word refers to any type of skin disease that leaves a person unclean.  
 So it's unclear whether this is Hansen's disease, or something like psoriasis or even a severe eczema.  
 Whatever it was, it was bad.  
 And **everyone knew he needed healing**.

**Including one of the Unknowns in this story—**  
 the slave girl, the young unnamed woman who had been captured from Israel and given to Naaman's wife as a servant.  
 Strangely, she not only sees Naaman's disability, she has **compassion** on him, and the **courage** to tell her mistress that there is a cure to be found for him—through the prophet Elisha of Israel.

So when Naaman hears this—  
 he does **what any proud, powerful man would do—**  
 he goes straight to the King of Aram!  
 And that King, another proud, powerful man, responds in kind.  
 He sends Naaman to the King of Israel with a letter, and Naaman **takes his riches** to entice the King to heal him!

When Naaman arrives with his horses and chariots,  
 the **King of Israel is overwhelmed by fear**,  
 worried that the truce between their countries is now over.  
 He tears his clothes in agony!  
 He says: *“Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”*

**Elisha the prophet hears about this whole affair**,  
 and tells the King of Israel to send Naaman to his house.  
 Notice that he asks Naaman to come to HIM,  
 he does **NOT offer to go to the mighty warrior**,  
 the way the proud powerful Naaman expects!

But Naaman is desperate, so he shows up with his horses and chariots, outside Elisha's home, and waits for the prophet to come out and see him personally, to heal his leprosy.

***But Elisha doesn't operate on the level of pride and power.***

In fact, he ***snubs*** Naaman, by sending a messenger to the warrior, telling him what to do—go and wash in the Jordan river seven times, and you will be healed.

Well, that didn't go over well!

*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 skin disease!"*

And here's where ***other courageous Unknown people*** enter the story.

Naaman's own servants, ***unnamed, brave people***, say 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'?**"*

The proud, powerful warrior finally decides to ***humbly follow*** the prophet's instructions—and after washing in the Jordan seven times, he is **healed!** *his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.*

He is not just healed—he is restored—'***like a young boy***'.

Like ***one of the Unknowns***,

the young servants who have helped him find healing!

Now think about all the lessons for us in this story!

***How often are we like Naaman?***

So ***sure that we know*** how God should work in our lives!

Have you ever tried to ***tell God exactly where and when*** to help you?

We've all done that, haven't we?

We want to be healed and helped,

But we also want it ***on our terms***, don't we?

And sometimes our terms are based on ***our own sense of pride and power***.  
 We may not approach God with horses and chariots,  
 But we might go to God as people who are very ***proud***,  
 People who feel ***important***,  
 People who ***want things our own way, right?***

And if we don't struggle with our own ego and pride,  
 We do see the ***pain that egos cause all around us***, right?  
 There's no shortage of people with inflated egos in the world today--  
 And that affects ALL of us.  
 Our whole society works on the premise of wanting  
 what we want, when we want it, how we want it.

We've seen the ***damage that big egos can do*** to our world and our lives.  
 Think of all the ***conflict, division, pain, and prejudice*** caused by pride and power!

Whether it's our own ego, that of others around us—  
***pride and power can hurt and hinder***—in more ways than one.

So, I wonder, ***how does this story of Naaman challenge us?***  
 How does it challenge ***you?***  
 And how does it challenge ***US—as a church, a community, a country?***  
***Where do we need to put our pride aside?***

And doesn't ***God know better***—  
 About what we need, and how we need to receive it?

***Naaman thought that he knew best.***

He was ***insulted*** that the prophet wouldn't meet him personally,  
 And that he was asked to do something as ***mundane and embarrassing***,  
 as washing in the Jordan river seven times!  
 What about the power of the prophet?  
 Didn't he have a special touch, or incantation he should use for someone like  
 Naaman?  
 Wouldn't he care about all the riches, chariots, and horses that Naaman was  
 bringing to his house?  
 Shouldn't he be moved by Naaman's power and position?

Naaman **scoffed at the idea of washing** in the small, local Jordan river,  
 Instead of one of the mighty waters of his own country.  
 Wasn't HIS healing something that should **happen in a place of power—  
 because he is such a powerful warrior!**

The question for us is:

**Where do we need to set our pride aside?**

How do we need to **surrender**, and just let God be God?

Let God help us, the way God wants!

Where do you **need help right now—**  
 and how are you **approaching** God about that?

I can't count the number of times that

**I have asked for an answer to prayer---**

And included the **how, when, where and why** it should be answered!

Instead of just telling God my need,

And leaving the rest to God.

It seems **so natural to tell God** HOW to respond.

I mean, we know what we need, right?

**Or do we?**

Didn't **Naaman need more than just the healing of his skin?**

If we keep reading in 2 Kings 5,

we learn that Naaman went back to the prophet Elisha after his healing,

and told him—**now I know that there is only one God—your God.**

**Naaman was healed, but not just on the outside.**

He was healed on the **inside too.**

His **heart** was forever changed.

He found new skin, and **new life and faith** in God!

What could be more important than that?

Maybe **his story is OUR story---**maybe we need an answer to our prayers,

Maybe we need a new **heart!**

A new **life!** A new **faith!**

The writer of 2 Kings is careful to tell us that  
*his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.*

***The flesh of a young boy--***

The writer knows that it was a young slave girl, and the young servants,  
 who save the day in this story—they are the ***voices of wisdom*** for Naaman.  
 Without these unnamed, Unknown voices,  
 Naaman would have never been healed!  
 He would have become an outcast in Aram,  
 Or just an angry warrior, storming away from the prophet's home.

***So, what about the Unknowns, in our lives, and in our world?***

Have you ever learned something important from an unlikely source?  
 I know that I have.

Ever found ***help from someone or something seemingly insignificant?***  
 Sometimes those are the real sources of ***wisdom***, aren't they?

This can be a ***challenging word*** to us as proud people,  
 As a proud church, a proud country.  
 But just imagine what can happen if we receive such wisdom!

***Where will you put your pride aside this week?***

***How will you listen for the wisdom of God—even from unlikely sources?***

***Friends, hear the Good News today.***

***We can put our pride aside---***and let God be God.

We have a God who wants to help us.

A God who knows exactly what we need—

and who might just use some Unknown people and places to meet those needs!

This is not just good news—it's life-changing.

It can be the path to a healing, and a new heart, a new life, a new faith.

And for that, All God's people can say together, Amen!