

Coming Empty-Handed

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[0 : 00] Okay, this morning I am very excited to continue our series, Christ in the Old Testament, as we look at the gospel story throughout the whole Bible, New Testament and Old Testament.

Now, when I was growing up, well for most of my life, I have dreamt of doing something great.

When I was a young boy, I wanted to be an artist.

I couldn't draw very well, but I wanted to be an artist. But I didn't just want to be any artist. I wanted to be a great artist. I wanted to paint and draw the very best things that anyone could draw or paint. Then I remember when I was about 12 years old, for about two or three weeks, I had this fantasy that I was going to write a book. I wasn't a very good writer, and I didn't particularly like writing, but I liked the idea of what people would say when a 12-year-old had written a New York Times bestseller book.

I thought that would be amazing to have my name in lights, that people thought, here is a child prodigy, a genius that can write this amazing book. Well, that only lasted a few weeks.

[1 : 06] But almost throughout all my high school, I wanted to be a great sportsman. I dreamt about playing football in the Premier League, which was a very far-fetched dream because I couldn't even make the first team at my school.

But that didn't matter. I wanted to play for Manchester United and score the winning goal, or I wanted to play cricket for South Africa, my country. I loved playing cricket.

Again, I was average, but I dreamt about being great at cricket. That obviously didn't materialize.

And then when I realized that God might be calling me to be a pastor, I had this dream about what it would be to be the world's greatest pastor.

To have thousands of people flocking to hear my sermons, clamoring to join my church, what it would look like and feel like to be a great pastor.

Throughout my life, I've despised the idea of being average or ordinary. Whatever I did, I wanted to achieve some kind of greatness. I wonder if you can resonate with me.

[2 : 08] This morning, as we come to our passage of Scripture, we're going to dive into one chapter in 2 Kings chapter 5. It's in your bulletin. And we're going to meet a man by the name of Naaman. And Naaman was somebody who not just dreamt about greatness.

He was a man who had achieved much greatness. In everything that he did in his life, he was well-respected. He had a reputation for being a great man. And he had broken through the ceilings of being ordinary and achieved greatness.

Now, the date is around 1200 BC. There is a man in Israel called Elisha. Elisha is the prophet of Israel. He's kind of the man that has brought God's word to the nation of Israel.

And he's a man that God has used very powerfully. He's done many miracles. He's raised some people from the dead. God has worked powerfully through Elisha. But that doesn't mean that everything is fine and well in the nation of Israel.

You see, Israel had just been attacked previously by another nation called Syria. And they were now under Syrian occupation. The king of Syria was, in a sense, their king.

[3 : 14] And the army of Syria was always on the doorstep threatening them. They were under Syrian authority and Syrian occupation. And so we pick up the story in 2 Kings 5, verse 1.

We're going to read through the text as we go today. And then we'll bring three points at the end. So read with me verse 1. Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor.

Because by him, the Lord had given great victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor. But he was a leper. Okay, so here we meet this man, Naaman.

Naaman is a powerful man. He's the commander of the armies of Syria. And Syria have defeated their enemies. They are a powerful military nation. Naaman is a well-respected man.

He's a well-decorated soldier. In addition to this, he has the favor of the king. The king likes him very much. Because due to Naaman's leadership, Syria defeated their arch enemies, Israel.

[4 : 19] By all accounts, Naaman has had a very successful life. His career has gone well. He is respected in society. He is well-liked and well-approved of.

He's the kind of man whose name would have frequently appeared in the financial times as a respected member of society. But Naaman has a problem. And it's a problem that he cannot solve. It's a problem that he cannot solve with all his fame, with his money, with his connections to the king. He cannot solve this problem with military might or power.

It's a problem that is going to kill him. And it's a problem that is outside of his control. You see, Naaman has leprosy. Okay? Now, leprosy is bad news for anyone.

Leprosy means that your body doesn't function so well. The members of your body stop working. You stop getting feeling. And your body stops functioning. But the problem with leprosy was not just that it affected your body.

[5 : 20] It also affected all your relationships. Because leprosy in those days was considered to be contagious. You're considered an outcast. You're often relegated to a leprosy colony.

And so overnight, all your relationships are destroyed. Your reputation in society is destroyed. And so for a man who's respected in society like Naaman, to contract leprosy was not just bad news for his body.

It meant the end of his career, the end of his status in society, the end of his reputation. For Naaman, this is devastating. Everything that he holds in high regard is suddenly in jeopardy.

And in those days, it was incurable. This is catastrophic news for anyone, but especially for a man who's well respected like Naaman.

And I wonder how we would respond if we were diagnosed with such a condition. Well, Naaman encounters some very good news. Some really good news. But he gets it from the most unlikely source.

[6 : 19] Read verse 2 with me. It says, Okay, so what's happening here?

On one of the military expeditions, Naaman goes. He conquers this village. And he finds this young lady there. And he says, My wife's been looking for someone like you to administer to her, to work in her service.

And so he brings her back. And she now works as a servant to Naaman's wife. She's obviously suffered a great deal. She's been trafficked from Israel to Syria. She's away from her family, her home, her people.

And she's now a slave in the service of Naaman's wife. She's just a young girl. She's just a servant. She's never commanded an army. She doesn't have the ear of the king like Naaman.

Here is just a simple girl who's probably never done anything great. We don't even know what her name is. Here is a young girl who's overlooked, who's despised, possibly abused, rejected.

[7 : 44] She's a foreigner. She's insignificant. She's poor. But here is a girl who knows something. She knows something that Naaman, for all his prestige, all his education, all his accolades, all his success, she knows something that Naaman doesn't.

Although she doesn't know much, she knew enough. She knew who God is. She knew that there's one true God. She knew that God is really God.

She knew that nothing is impossible for God. And most importantly, she knew how to find him. She knew how to find him. She knew this servant girl understands something of the sovereignty of God and the mercy of God.

For she says, if only Naaman were with Elisha, the man of God, he would heal her. And parents, just as a side, I was thinking about this last night as I was just finishing up preparing.

For those of us that are parents, I want us just to consider, as we long for our children, who would we rather our children grow up to be like? Educated, sophisticated, well-regarded Naaman, who has no clear idea who God is and how to find him.

[9 : 00] Or a young servant girl whose name we don't remember, who's never achieved anything great, but someone who knows who God is. Who knows that God is truly God. Who knows that nothing is impossible for God.

And knows how to find him. I pray as parents that we will be the kind of parents that want our children to grow up like this young girl. Someone who knows God. Well, for some reason, this girl, I don't fully understand it, but she decides to show the most incredible grace and mercy to Naaman. Instead of hating him and reviling him, instead of gloating in his downfall and saying to herself, well, he deserves everything that comes his way, she decides to show him incredible grace.

Because she goes to her mistress, Naaman's wife, and she says, I know how Naaman can get healed of his leprosy. Naaman needs to go to Israel and to find the man of God.

Well, Naaman hears this, and he goes straight to his king, the king of Syria, and he tells him what this girl says. And together they hatch a plan. And the plan is this.

[10:03] They say, you go to the king of Israel. I, the king of Syria, will write a letter, give it my official royal stamp, and I will command him to make sure that he secures your healing.

Okay? And so Naaman gets on his horse, and he takes a whole entourage of people and money and gifts, and he goes to the king of Israel. And so look at what happens as he goes.

He's determined to secure his healing, and so verse 5 says this, he went taking with him 10 talents of silver, 6,000 shekels of gold, and 10 changes of clothing.

Okay? So he goes to the king of Israel with a letter from the king of Syria. He also goes with his army behind him, kind of backing him. But in case the king of Israel is giving him any trouble or, you know, is making it a bit difficult, he takes a whole pile of money and some changes of royal clothing just to sweeten the deal, you know, just in case he needs some encouragement.

Okay? And so he goes, and verse 6, it says, He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, When this letter reaches you, know that I, the king of Syria, have sent you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.

[11:19] When the king of Israel read this letter, he tore his clothes. Okay? Good thing Naaman sent a change of clothes with him, right? And he said to him, Am I God? Am I able to kill and make alive?

This man sends word to me to cure a man of leprosy. Consider how this king is seeking a quarrel with me, a fight with me. So the king gets worried, right? Because now Naaman's come to him on the king of Syria, and this letter says, You are to heal this man.

Well, he doesn't have the power to heal him, but at the same time, if he refuses him and lets him down, or maybe the Syrian army is going to come invade them again and attack them. So what's he to do?

He can't heal him, but he also can't refuse him. Well, look at verse 8 with me. It says, When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent him a letter, saying, Why have you torn your clothes?

Let this man Naaman come to me now, that he may know that there truly is a prophet, a man of God in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house.

[12:25] But Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the river Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be made clean. You'll be restored. You'll be made clean.

Okay, so Elisha sends a servant to go and meet Naaman, and he says, You want to be healed? You want to be restored? Well, there's a river down there called Jordan. Just go and wash seven times, and God will heal you.

Sounds simple, right? Well, look at Naaman's response. Look at verse 11. Naaman was angry, and he went away, muttering to himself, Behold, I thought that man would come out and stand and call on the name of his God and wave his hands over me and cure me of my leprosy.

Are not Abanra and Pahapa, the rivers of Damascus, are they not better than all these rivers in Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleaned? And so he turned away and went away in a fit of rage.

This is not turning out to be a very fruitful business trip for poor Naaman, right? Firstly, this young servant girl really gets his hopes up and says, Just go to Israel and you'll be healed.

[13:32] He goes there and he goes to king's palace and he says, Here I am. I want my healing. And the king says, I can't heal you. And just when it looks like all hope is lost, Elisha sends a message saying, Come to my house.

I'll help you. And he goes there, and Elisha doesn't even meet him. He sends a messenger to go and talk to him. And finally, this messenger gives him a pretty silly message.

He says, You want to be healed? Just go wash in that river. And Naaman is thinking to himself, What kind of insult is this? Doesn't Elisha realize who I am?

Don't you know, Naaman says, that I am the commander of the king's army, the very army that have defeated you. Don't you realize you are our subject?

And when I come to Israel, you treat me with such inferiority. And when I come to Elisha, you don't even come out of your house and greet me. You just send your servant.

[14:28] Who do you think I am? And then he says, If I wanted to merely wash in a river, I would have gone to a great river, in a great country like Syria, with great people around me, important people watching me, because that's who I am.

Why should I wash myself in some meager little river, in a meager little nation like Israel, with unimportant people washing me? I am Naaman. I deserve a better treatment than that.

And so Naaman turns around in his chariot, and he leaves in a fit of rage. You see, friends, what God is trying to show Naaman here, and what God is actually trying to show us, is that Naaman's problem was not just that he had leprosy of the skin.

The problem was actually that he has leprosy of the heart. You see, Naaman's heart is sick. It's not just his skin that's sick. That's one thing. But Naaman's heart is not sick, is not well.

His heart is diseased and is broken. It's the inner reality of his heart that needs healing. See, friends, for all of us here, the reason for most of our problems and our struggles in life is because our hearts have got leprosy.

[15:39] Our hearts are sick. Our hearts don't function like they're meant to. The reason why marriage is hard and we fight with our spouses is because we are self-centered and we are self-seeking. The reason why we don't get on with our colleagues and our family is because we are self-justifying and we want to seek our own pleasure.

The reason why we get disappointed with our kids and we get frustrated when things don't go our way is because our hearts, at the deepest and the most fundamental recesses of our hearts, is that we actually seek our own good.

We're looking after ourselves. And in our hearts, we want to be somebody great. But God is showing us here that Naaman's problem wasn't just his lifestyle or his actions.

Naaman didn't just need to change his eating habits or to do a bit more exercise. What Naaman needed was somebody to cure the leprosy of his heart. Friends, just like leprosy, sin makes our hearts not function properly.

Sin damages our relationships. It damages our friendships. And just like leprosy, sin is highly infectious. It affects every area of our lives. But you know what? Just like leprosy, the leprosy of our hearts, sin is just as incurable.

[16:53] You can't fix it by changing your lifestyle. You can't fix it by going to the gym. You can't fix it by eating more healthily. There's a problem with our hearts and we need a miracle, a cure to fix it.

Friends, the problem with sin is that it's destructive, it's far-reaching, it's incurable, it's fatal. And none of us are immune from it. None of us are immune from it.

And that's exactly why God brings Naaman to this terrible situation where he wants to show Naaman the condition of his heart. He brings Naaman to the end of himself and he wants to say, Naaman, can't you see what's going on in your heart?

Can't you see the reason why you're angry is because you feel entitled to be treated better than that? Friends, sometimes God will bring us to a terrible situation. Sometimes God will bring difficulty into our life because in his kindness and his grace, he wants to reveal to us the ugliness of the sin in our hearts.

He wants to reveal to us the true condition of our hearts. And it's the mercy of God to show us that. And so God does this for Naaman. But the good news of the scriptures is this, that God doesn't leave us there.

[17:59] You see, just as God sent this young servant girl, this girl that was overlooked and despised, God sent this servant girl to show Naaman how to get his healing, God sent another servant.

He sent another servant. Someone too that was overlooked, someone that was despised, someone that society didn't think of very highly, God sent Jesus Christ to show us the condition of our heart, to bring us healing.

You see, this servant girl is the most unlikely and improbable sources of hope for Naaman's life. And Jesus Christ in the same way, born in the backwaters of Israel, just like the servant girl despised, rejected, looked down upon, in many ways unimpressive, very few people thought he was great.

Who would have thought a servant girl would have been the solution to Naaman's healing? Friends, who would have thought that a carpenter from Israel, born to an unwed teenage mom, born in the backwaters of Israel, would hold the key to our healing and our salvation.

But he does. He does. And just as the servant girl shows Naaman how to be saved and healed, Jesus Christ, another servant, comes and he shows us the salvation that we so desperately need.

[19:12] Well, let's get back to our story. Look what happens here. Elisha tells Naaman via his servant to go and wash in the Jordan River and be healed. And twice, in verse 11, verse 12, the scripture tells us that Naaman is angry.

Now the question is why? Why is Naaman angry with Elisha when Elisha has just told him how to be healed? Why wouldn't Naaman be frustrated?

Elisha just told him how to be saved, how to be cured of this life-threatening disease, this disease that is going to kill him. Naaman has just solved his problem, and yet Elisha has just solved this problem, and yet Naaman is angry.

Friends, why does Naaman reject this good news that Elisha brings him, the good news of his healing? Well, I'll pull it to you. It's the exact same reason that we reject the gospel.

The same reason that Naaman rejects Elisha's good news is the same reason that you and I reject the gospel. It's the same reason we don't believe the gospel deeply. There's three things here that Naaman finds offensive about Elisha's proposed solution.

[20:18] Three reasons why he's offended, even insulted by Elisha's supposedly good news. And they're the same reasons why we get insulted by the gospel. Three reasons. First is this.

Look at how Elisha snubs Naaman. He doesn't honor him as Naaman thinks he deserves to be honored. You see, Naaman prides himself in his status as a great man.

He's a commander of the king's army. He has a reputation as being a man of great valor, of great strength, of great courage. He prides himself as being a man of influence, a man of wealth.

He's a man of financial means. And so when he hears that he needs to go to Elisha, he comes with his horses and his chariots and his entourage and his 6,000 gold coins and his change of clothing. And he stands outside Elisha's door. And what does Elisha do? He doesn't even come out to meet him. He sends a servant to go and tell him what to do. And Naaman's response is, doesn't Elisha realize who I am?

[21:19] Who does he think I am? That all he does is he sends his servant. Elisha doesn't even come out to greet me. And Naaman is offended by the lack of awe and the lack of reverence that Elisha shows him.

Friends, in the Gospels, Jesus Christ is constantly showing us that those who think of themselves as important miss the grace of God, while those who don't think of themselves as particularly important find the grace of God.

Remember the one point, a rich, young official comes to Jesus. And he says, Jesus, I want to know what is it that I need to do to get into the kingdom of God, to know God, to secure an eternal life.

And Jesus shows him a couple of areas in his life where he needs God's grace. And every time Jesus says, well, what about this area of your life? This rich, young, wealthy man says to him, no, I think I'm covered in that area.

I think that's good. And Jesus says, okay, well, what about this area of your life? And he says, no, I've done that. Don't worry, I'm fine. Thank you. And Jesus keeps on wanting to show him his need for grace.

[22:26] And eventually this man who's so proud goes off. And Jesus turns to his disciples and he says, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Okay. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a wealthy person to enter the kingdom of God. What's Jesus saying? He's saying, it's so hard for those that are rich in self-importance, those who are rich in self-sufficiency, those who are rich in pride to receive the grace of God.

But then straight after that, a Roman centurion comes to Jesus. Here's a man who has men under him. He's a man of authority. And he comes to Jesus and he says, Jesus, my servant is sick.

Will you come and heal him? And Jesus says, sure, let me come to your house. And the centurion says to him, Jesus, I'm not worthy to have you come to my house. Just say the word and I know he'll be healed.

Friends, here is a rich young official that insists on his own self-importance and he gets nothing. Here is a Roman centurion who insists on his own worthlessness, his lack of importance, and he gets everything that he needs.

[23 : 36] Jesus said this, he said, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are not rich in their own eyes, said Jesus, for those are the ones who are able to receive what I want to give them.

Friends, God is teaching Naaman what he wants to teach us today, that the only way to find God, the only way to find the grace of God, the only way to find the healing and the salvation that Naaman needed and you and I need is to admit our need for it and to come to God on our knees. See, Naaman goes to Elisha and he expects Elisha to bow down before him and to revere him and to say, oh, your greatness, thank you for coming to my house, let me help you.

And Elisha gives him none of that. Elisha says, that's not how you find God. Naaman, you want to find God? You find him on your knees. You find him on your knees.

Friends, I don't know where you're at today. You may be a Christ follower, you may be a spiritual seeker. You may have been a Christian for many years, maybe you're a Christian with doubts, maybe you're a Christian with questions, maybe you're not so sure about this whole Jesus thing.

[24 : 45] Friends, come to Jesus. Bring your doubts, bring your questions, bring your concerns, bring your pain, bring your anxiety. Come to Jesus.

But don't come in pride. Don't come in self-importance. Don't come rich in self-sufficiency. Come to him on your knees. That's where you find him. You find him on your knees.

Naaman is offended because Elisha doesn't honor him as a great man. He asks him to come to him on his knees. Second thing is this. Naaman is offended by the simplicity of grace.

Naaman's offended by almost the ordinariness of Elisha's solution. The fact that it was just so plain, so simple, made it untenable for Naaman. Look at what he says.

Look at verse 11. He says, Throughout this story, God has been trying to show Naaman that he's been looking in all the wrong places to find what he's looking for.

[26 : 12] First, it's a little servant girl, not the great doctors of Syria, that tell him where to find his healing. Then when Naaman does saddle up his war horse and he goes to Israel, where does he go?

He goes to king's palace because palaces are where important people go. That's where important solutions are found. That's where problems are solved. But the king can't help him. And so he hears that Elisha can help him.

So he goes to Elisha's house, but it's not Elisha, the great man of God, that heals him. It's the servant, the man whose name we don't even know, that tells him to go and wash in the rivers.

And eventually, finally, when the servant does give him a solution, it's as simple and as unimpressive as just go and take a bath in the rivers.

You see, Naaman wanted dramatic ceremony. He wanted religious occasion. He wanted bells and whistles and smoke and fire and lights and he wanted fireworks. He wanted Elisha to build an altar and to call on God and wave his hands and high ceremony.

[27 : 14] And he doesn't get any of that. Elisha says, just trust me. Just trust me. Go and wash in the river and you'll be cleaned. And friends, the gospel story is one of majesty and his magnificence but is clothed in ordinariness.

It's the creator of the universe born in a manger. It's the God of all creation hanging on a cross. It's in the simplicity and the ordinariness of Jesus is part of the reason why Israel rejected him.

They wanted a king to come on a war horse. They wanted a king who they could fear and they could adore. They wanted a soldier to come in might and power and deliver their enemies. And instead, they got a baby in a manger.

And Jesus tells a parable where he says, the gospel is like a man who found a treasure buried in a field. And he went away and he sold everything he had to buy that field to have that treasure.

And the truth is, that's exactly what the gospel is like. It's a treasure that is worth everything. It's a treasure that's worth more than all the gold and the diamonds and all the jewels and all the world.

[28 : 22] It's a magnificent treasure. But very often, this treasure is buried in a field of ordinariness. It's hidden in a field of ordinariness. And Naaman wanted to find, to be honored and he wanted the power and the glory and the strength.

And yet, that's not where you find what you're looking for. Friends, seldom is God found on High Street. It's in the field of ordinariness we find what our souls are looking for. Friends, what about you?

Where are you looking for Jesus? Do you want Jesus to come and be an ally to your quest for health and wealth and prosperity? A comfortable life? Friends, you won't find him there. You'll find Jesus in the simplicity of repentance. You'll find Jesus in the simplicity of a child. You'll find Jesus as you come and serve the marginalized and the hurting and the poor and the vulnerable.

You'll find Jesus as you serve those that have got no means to serve you back. You'll find him on your knees. Friends, when was the last time you got on your knees? Cried out to God and said, God, I'm so grateful.

[29 : 30] That's where you find him. You find him on your knees. The gospel's mind staggeringly glorious and beautiful, but it's hidden in a field of ordinariness. Finally, Naaman is offended by the cost of grace.

By the cost of grace. This is a little tricky to see, but if we understand the gospel, this is really important. So let's see if we can make sense of this. Elisha comes to Naaman and on one hand he says to Naaman, Naaman, if you want to be healed, it'll cost you nothing.

Remember, Naaman comes with a whole truckload of money and clothing and wealth and gifts to buy his healing. Right? And Elisha says, it'll cost you nothing.

It's for absolutely free. But on the other hand, Elisha says, it'll cost you everything. And that was a price that Naaman was not willing to pay. See friends, when you come to Jesus, his offer of grace is exactly the same.

On one hand, he says it costs you nothing. It's absolutely free. You can't earn it. You can't buy it. You can't merit it. But at the same time, it demands everything of you. It'll cost you everything.

[30 : 41] And just like Naaman, for many of us, the reason we don't know God and the reason we don't know God deeply is that that is a price more than we're willing to pay. And so look at what happens here.

Naaman arrives with his chariots and his servants and his entourage and Naaman expects that if he's going to be healed of this leprosy, it's going to cost him a lot. It's going to cost him a lot of money, a lot of his time, a lot of his energy, a lot of his devotion.

It's going to cost a high price. And Naaman is willing to pay this price. Right? But what Elisha tells him to do cost him none of those things. But what did it cost him? What did it cost him?

It cost him his pride. Right? And that was a price that Naaman is not willing to pay. A little bit later, his servants come to him and he says, Master, so Naaman gets on his horse and he says, I'm out of here.

Forget you, Elisha. I'm going back to Syria. Right? And his servants chase him down. They get on their horse and they say, wait, wait, wait, Naaman, let's talk about this. And they say, if that man, the prophet, had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?

[31 : 49] You see, if Elisha had said to him, go and prove your greatness, go slay some dragon, go build a magnificent temple, go on an expedition to the ends of the world, go and swim through fire and ice, Naaman would have said, that I can do.

There's a price I can pay. There's a God I can serve. Right? If Elisha had said, go and do some magnificent thing to prove your greatness, Naaman would have said, yes, now I can do it.

I'll show you that I deserve this healing. Here's Naaman's problem. He says, you want me to go wash in that river? Anyone can do that. Anyone can do that. My soldiers can do that.

A child can do that. A drug dealer can do that. Give me something great to do. Give me something that will show that I'm magnificent. Give me something that will prove my greatness and how rich and wealthy I am.

Give me something that will cost me a lot. And Naaman, Elisha comes to him and says, unless you wash in the river, you'll never be saved. Sally Lloyd-Jones, the author of the Jesus Storybook Bible, writes this.

[32 : 54] She says, all Naaman needed was nothing, but nothing was the one thing that Naaman didn't have. You see that? Elisha didn't want his money.

He didn't want his devotion. He didn't want his religious, moral performance. He wanted him to come empty. He wanted him to admit that he needed God's grace.

He wanted him to come with nothing. Naaman had everything in the world except nothing. He didn't know how to come empty-handed. Remember the words of that old hymn?

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I cling. Friends, the only way that we find God, the only way that we find the grace of God that we're looking for is to not come with all our stuff and all our moral performance and all the things that we think will earn us our salvation.

It's to come before our Christ, our King, with nothing. It's to come empty. It's to come and admit that we need his grace. As Hong Kongers, we don't like to admit that we're in anybody's debt, right?

[34 : 03] We don't like people to give us something that we haven't paid for or earned or achieved. We don't like to lose face like that. We don't like to admit that we're either weak or incapable or in someone else's debt.

But friends, the grace of God is not something that you can achieve. It's simply a gift that you receive. And these three rocks of offense, the humility of God's grace, the simplicity of God's grace, and the cost of God's grace, the cost of his price, these things almost cost Naaman his life.

Naaman almost went home empty-handed. He almost died because of these three things. And friends, you know what? These three things are the exact same things that will cost us finding the grace of God.

They're the exact same things that will stop us from finding who God is and encountering him in his power. And although it's the easiest thing in the world, at the same time, it's the most difficult thing in the world because the only thing that we don't know how to bring to God is our nothing.

Our nothing. Well, look at what happens next. Naaman is offended. He's insulted. He's angry. And so he gets on his horse and he says, forget this guy, Elisha.

[35 : 12] I'm going back to Syria. Verse 13. His servants drew near to him and said, Master, let's talk about this. If that prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?

Well, how much more then when he says, simply go and wash in the river? Okay, so that they negotiate and eventually they convince him. Naaman tentatively, he decides to swallow his pride, to trust Elisha and to bank his life on this very simple word that Elisha has given him.

Verse 14. So Naaman went down to the river and he dipped himself seven times into the Jordan according to the word of the man of God and his flesh was made clean like a baby's bottom.

Right? His flesh was restored like a child and he was clean. Okay? So Naaman goes down. He's not so sure that this is going to work but he says, okay, I'll try it.

He washes in the river and God miraculously heals him. But now look what happens. Naaman goes home a different man. Naaman is changed.

[36 : 17] He's not just, his skin is not just healed, his heart is healed. Look what happens in verse 15. In verse 15, he goes back and he says, now I know that there is no God in all the earth except the God of Israel.

You see, he came to Israel superstitious. He came thinking, maybe this God can heal me. I'm not so sure but maybe this God can heal me. But now he goes back, a believer.

Naaman is not just healed, he's saved. Because what happens after this is he goes back to Syria, he's now a believer in the God of Israel. He came to Israel to save his reputation, to save his wealth, to save his career, to save his name.

But now he goes back to Syria, a worshiper, not of the gods of Syria but of the God of Israel, the one true God. He goes back and he's willing to put his name, his reputation, his career, his wealth, everything on the line as he goes back and he says, I believe in that God.

See what's happened? He came to try and save himself and now he goes back putting all those things on the line. What's happened to Naaman? Friends, he's become a believer.

[37 : 27] He's got saved. God hasn't just saved his skin, God has changed his heart. And friends, that's the gospel. That's what happens in the gospel of the Bible, in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

As we encounter the living God, God changes not just our circumstances, he changes our hearts. Naaman comes out of the water a new man. But it's all by grace. He hasn't done a single thing to deserve it.

He hasn't earned it. He hasn't bought it. He hasn't achieved it. In fact, that's been the problem all along. All along, he's wanted to earn it. He's wanted to buy it. He's wanted to achieve it. But for the first time that he comes and he tries to get it not by buying it, but he receives it simply as a gift of grace, that's when Naaman is changed.

Let's land with this. The question I want to ask as we land is why. Why could Naaman receive this incredible gift for free? He didn't earn it.

[38 : 26] He didn't buy it. He didn't pay a cent for it. You see, this story is a true story. It's not just a parable in the Bible. This is true, but it's also true for us. Friends, we too, like Naaman, will find our healing, find our restoration, will find our salvation for free.

You can't earn it. You can't buy it. You can't achieve it. But why? How can you and I receive it for free? Why does God forgive us of the leprosy of our hearts?

Why does God give us a new heart? Why does God forgive us of our sin absolutely for free? You can't buy it. You can't earn it. You can't achieve it. Is it because God has no standards that he just says, oh, I'll just forgive your sin.

Let's just pretend it doesn't happen. What's a little bit of sin between me and you? Does God have no standards? Of course, God's got standards. You read the Bible, you know how holy, perfect, righteous God is.

Of course, God has standards. So how can God just forgive Naaman's sin, your sin, and my sin, without us having to do anything to achieve it or earn it? Friends, the reason is because the great cost that Naaman had to pay but he couldn't pay, Jesus paid on our behalf.

[39 : 37] Jesus Christ went to the cross before us. See, friends, there is one deed, there is one remedy which could cure the leprosy of our hearts. The only deed, the only cost, the only remedy cost the only sinless man his life on the cross.

Jesus did go to the ends of the earth for us because we couldn't. You see, even if Elisha had said to Naaman, Naaman, go and slay some dragon. Naaman, go to the ends of the earth.

Naaman, go and do some great thing. No matter what Naaman did, wouldn't have been enough.

There is no price enough to pay for the healing and salvation that God had for him.

But there is a price. But it costs the only sinless man his life on the cross. Jesus Christ didn't just swim through fire and ice. Jesus Christ swam through an ocean of divine judgment and divine wrath for us.

Jesus didn't just go and slay some enemy. He slayed the ultimate dragon of sin and death for us.

Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price that you and I couldn't pay.

[40 : 41] Friends, what could wash our sin away? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What could make us whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. You see, the story of Naaman is really the story of the gospel.

It's the story of all of us. It's the story of how our hearts are sick with leprosy. But it's the story of how Jesus has come to heal us. Jesus has come to give us new life. But Jesus comes and he says, you can't buy it.

You can't earn it. You can't achieve it. All you do is you come to me on your knees. You come to me with nothing in your hands. You come and you admit that you need it. And in that place you'll find the grace that your heart is looking for.

It's the story of how Jesus secured our hope and our healing from the terrible sickness of our own hearts. It's found in the grace and the kindness of Christ. It's the story of how the grace of God is for free because it cost his son everything as Jesus died on the cross for us.

It's the story of how we come and we bring to Christ our nothing and get everything in return.

Friends, will you trust him? Friends, will you come to Jesus Christ this morning?

[41 : 48] Friends, will you come to him empty handed? Will you come and bring you nothing? Will you come and admit your need for his grace? Will you come and admit, Christ, I need you? Let's do that together now.

Let's pray. Will you join me as we pray together. Father, we admit that, God, we are no different from Naaman.

We may look different on the outside. The trajectory of our lives and our life story may be a little different. But in our heart of hearts, God, we too are suffering from a great disease.

God, sin has captured our hearts and we have turned from you. Father, we need a great miracle to heal us. We can't save ourselves, Lord.

