

I've Got Dirt

2 Kings 5:1-19

If you have been with us at all this year, so far, we have been on a long series through the story line of the bible, calling it the biblical narrative, Seeing it as one complete story. What's awesome about this is that you could jump in at any Sunday and each week could stand as its own lesson. So, you're not missing out!

In this story today we will encounter 2 people who are **suffering**. And neither of them really understands why;

- One is a non-believer who discovered he has a terminal disease
- And the other is a 14-year-old girl whose parents were murdered, and she was kidnapped and sold as a slave.

Both of them are suffering, both of them carries baggage, both of them are considered as unclean and dirty. I have titled this lesson "**I've Got Dirt!**"

And in this passage, we get to see how God weaves their two stories together, to show us how he can wash us clean of our dirty pass and redeem our stories.

I know that a lot of you have situations where you wonder what in the world is God doing, or if there even is a God, based on how things are going in your life. In some ways, you also feel like you are carrying **dirt**. Dark secrets or painful past that you feel if anyone knows then they will judge you. because we are fallen creators, **we've all got dirt**.

I think every time I watch Bob Ross, I am just as confused and amazed at every process he is at. He would slap these blobs together and you're wondering, "*what's going to happen?*" then, "*oh it's a happy little cloud!*" then he would draw this huge ugly vertical line in the middle and your like, "*why did he ruin this happy cloud!?*" then before you knew it, he turned the ugly line into a happy tree.

Well, in a way, that's what you are going to see God do in this story. We've got these narratives that feel like accidental, random blobs of color, but then God adds a couple of strokes, and suddenly they transform into works of art.

We will be in the book of **2 Kings 5:1-18**

Recap: Israel disobeyed and now they fell apart, captured by other nations and became slaves.

- Because of Israel's persistent sin, God allowed them to be driven into captivity
- **[1]** **Leprosy** was the most feared disease in the world. It began as this small, white spot of skin, like a rash, that would soon spread all over your body.
 - And wherever it spread, the nerve endings in your skin would die, and boils would break out, leaving these gaping wounds of raw flesh; eventually body parts fell off; your facial features lost shape and became deformed.
 - And in time, you could addition for the walking dead.
 - And in those days, there was no cure. Leprosy had a 100% death rate. And it was **highly contagious**. So, the moment one of these spots was discovered on you, you were immediately banished, you had to social distance in isolation, until you died.
- **[5]** 750lbs. of silver and 150lbs. of gold...and a few t-shirts. In those days Syrian **clothing was handmade** and very expensive. Having 10, would be like having a closet full of Louis Vuitton. In other words; The man of God would look bougie.
- **[18]** I think Elisha is able to see a **bigger purpose in this leprosy**.
- **[10]** Elisha didn't even go out, he sent out a kid, an **intern**. I read somewhere that when Steve Jobs released the first iPad, the president sent the Chief of State to congratulate him, instead of calling himself. So it made Steve mad and depressed for a few weeks. So, why did Elisha do that?
- **[15]** Now Naaman is meeting Elisha for the very first time! What would he say? Maybe thank Elisha for healing his deadly disease?

NO! "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."

Here's the question: **How did a man go from feeling burdensome to beholding?**
You need to understand, Naaman was NOT looking for God in the first place, he was looking for a cure for leprosy!

- ***But God used his search for a cure to lead him to something even greater than the cure itself—a relationship with God himself.***
- *And knowing God was so much more valuable, that he didn't even mention the healing. All he talked about was God.*

I want to show you **4 outcomes that God may be working through your sufferings**, your pains, and your **dirt**.

I've got dirt, you've got dirt! It may be **burdensome**, but maybe he is using those **baggage** to bring us to a state of **behold**.

1. God uses your dirt to draw you to himself

What if God had a much bigger purpose in your pain?

You see, up until the moment that Naaman discovered this spot on him, he had felt on top of the world. The story says he was "highly regarded," which means he was the king's right hand man, "a celebrity" with a lot of Twitter followers and everybody loved him.

All that was taken away in a moment. By **one spot**. One small spot made Naaman realize how frail and fleeting his life is!

What if God was saying that to you in your pain?

- What if the problem had been put there by God to wake you up?

John Piper says in the book coronavirus and Christ, "*This pandemic is a merciful wake-up call to be ready for Christ return... I think that's God's message for the world in this outbreak. He is calling the world to repentance while there is still time.*"

What if God in this time, is doing something so much greater than ending the pandemic, but he is doing something through this pandemic.

He is bringing lost people and wondering children back to himself.

Let me ask you: What has God shown to you over this year? Where has a spot been revealed in your life that tells you that you're not as together as you have thought?

- Maybe there's a problem in your relationship
- A habit you can't break
- A fear that paralyzed you
- Personal failure
- A health scare you have that makes you think about your mortality
- A guilt you can't get rid of

These **spots point us to a bigger problem**—You see, **leprosy, throughout the Bible** is seen as unclean, **symbolizes sin**.

Like leprosy, sin is deadly. It grows in you and corrupts you over time.

You lose feeling in parts of your life—parts of you die. Your **innocence**; your **joy**; your **compassion** for others. Your soul has a disease, and it is terminal.

Scripture says, "**For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God...**" and "**the wages of sin is death.**"

This is what God is trying to save us from! Therefore, God may allow these spots in our lives to draw us to himself!

John Piper says, "*Calamities are wakeup calls to see the moral horror and spiritual ugliness of sin against God...for the household of God, this judgment from God is purifying not punishment, it is discipling not destruction.*"

2. God uses your dirt to increase his grace

Notice how everyone rejected Naaman's gifts. The king of Israel rejected his gold and t-shirts and Elisha rejected his gifts in **verse 15-16**. (*I have never heard of a pastor refusing free stuff*)

I think that by accepting the gifts, it might make Naaman and everyone that is watching think that he purchased the miracle with his riches.

And the one thing that must be understood about the GOSPEL is that it is a free gift of grace. It can't be purchased; it can't be won. It has to be received by grace.

Naaman was not healed, because he went on a quest, or did something good or awesome to **deserve healing**. No! It was through **an action of faith**.

This is why our religion trips up so many people!

Like Naaman, so many **rejects** his grace, because it's too easy to **receive**. **Verse 12-13**

This is the same simple message God has for us, "**it is by grace that you have been saved so that no one can boast**"

It's when we recognized how desperate we are, how wicked, and perverted our hearts is. When our **sins** become **bitter** to us, that's when **grace** becomes **sweet**. When we are able to knowledge, "**I've Got Dirt**" **GRACE is present**.

Also, this is worth pointing out right here, at the end of the story **[18]**, it seems like Naaman is asking for permission to bow down to idols. (*he's like, I'll follow God, but I'll still struggling with a lot of things*) We know that's not right and we would assume that Elisha would correct him but instead he says, "**Go in Peace**"

His obedience is not perfect, but it's a start, and God honors that. I think a lot of Christians forget this. When someone comes to Christ we expect an immediate transition.

They are a **spiritual baby**; they will crawl and fall but that's ok because they are going in the right direction. **Ex: Kenny**

3. God uses your dirt to reduce your pride

Through this story we see God breaking down Naaman's pride. This was a man of high position. Through this whole story Naaman has only been communication through servants, they have been the one that's giving him advice. Elisha made him bathe in a dirty creek.

The path to God is a path of **humility**, Naaman wants to find salvation through **power** and **strength**. But it won't be found that way; because salvation is a **gift of God**.

That's why salvation will not be received through our **strength** but through our **surrender**.

You see, the cross absolutely destroys our pride. It tells you that God's judgment on your life was death. There's nothing you could have done to fix or clean yourself. But that Jesus did everything right, where you have done wrong, and given you his life as a gift.

That's why the question is: **do you have enough humility to come to Jesus?**
Similar to Naaman, God called all those who believe in him to also submerge in water.

Baptism is a picture of us laying down our lives at the foot of the cross, where his blood has washed us clean. Declaring, "*I have died and with Christ, and I no longer live but he lives in me.*"

If you are a believer, which means you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and savior, and you have not been baptized, I encourage you to make that decision, because it's a command from Jesus. To humbly follow his example in baptism.

If you want to make that decision to be baptized, please approach me afterwards and we can discuss more about it.

4. God uses your dirt to testify to others

I want us to focus a bit on the little girl. She's kind of the unseen hero in the story.

How would you respond to the person who had murdered many of your friends and family, and had taken you captive making you a slave in his house?

I would have said, "Ha! He got leprosy... Serves him right. Now I get to watch his old body fall apart and die."

Listen to what this sweet little girl says: [3] She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

She seems like she genuinely cares about him. Somehow, she has forgiven him for what he has done to her. Her response shows that she knew God was in control, and she just have to do what's right.

I can't wait to give this girl a hug when we get to heaven. Because this sweet little girl, whose name is not even mention, gives us such a **beautiful picture of Jesus**.

- It was not by her faults, she suffered. She was **innocent**
- In fact, her suffering was caused by Naaman's sin, but she forgave him.
- And through HER **suffering, Naaman received a good news of salvation**.
- **Think about it:** Had she not been in this situation, Naaman would have never heard about Elisha, and so would have died of leprosy.

MUSIC

In the same way, our salvation would come through a '**Suffering Servant**.'

- Like this little girl, Jesus suffered not for **his own sin**, but ours.
- And like her, **instead of hating us** for causing his suffering, he forgave us and **kept loving us**.
- And through his suffering, we received eternal life by the washing of our sins.
 - **We killed him! Isaiah 53** *But he was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his stripes (the stripes we caused) we are healed.*
 - "Lord, now indeed I find, thy power and thine alone, can change the leper's spots, and melt the heart of stone. Jesus paid it all! All to him I owe! Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow."

Suffering seems to be the means by which God brings salvation into the world.

So my question is: are you willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel? the cure to sin and death is in our hands.

Paul says it like this: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, (Colossians 1:24)

In other words, we suffer together for the sake of the gospel. We have all been called on a very important mission, in fact it's a suicidal mission, because the mission starts when we lay down our lives.

God can use your past, your pain, your dirt to be a testament for others.

The question is; will you let him?

We have a God who is not shocked by our sins, but is able to use those pains;

- To Draw you to himself
- To Increase his grace
- To Reduce your pride
- To Testify to others

So that we can say without judgment "**I've got D.I.R.T.**" BC He is able to work all things for his good. To **minimize** me, as I **magnify** HIM.

In our story, there is a really odd request made by Naaman in verse 17.

“Then Naaman said, “If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of dirt, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD”

Why would he ask for 2 loads of **dirt**? It seems weird, but essentially, we tend to do this as well. Let me explain, Naaman had such a miraculous experience in Samaria that he wanted to take some of it back with him. So, he could say, “**I’ve got special Dirt**”

But that’s the thing, every time we put our faith in an experience or when we use an object as a good luck charm, it is essentially **idol worship**.

- Wearing the **t-shirt** from a Christian concert will not guarantee good luck.
- Hanging up **dream catchers** will not catch bad dreams.
- Putting the **bible** at the front of your car dashboard, will not guarantee a safe drive.
- God will not respond to you praying to a **rosery**
- Just because you’re going to **church** does not guarantee your salvation

This is idol worship! If this is the case, then you’ve got the wrong image of God, “**you’ve got more dirt**” Because the presence of God is NOT tied to a **location** or **object**. You don’t have to continue carrying that burden, he promised that he will be with you and you can learn to let go.

You don’t need more dirt; God wants to set you free.

That’s why our religion is by **Grace** alone, through **Faith** alone, in **Christ** alone that we are saved.

STAND

There is this story in the NT where this blind beggar encounters Jesus.

And Jesus could have just snapped his fingers or said a word to give him sight, but instead he spit on the ground and mix it with dirt and placed it on the man’s eyes.

This beggar is used to people **spiting on him**, making fun of him. And for most of his life he has been sitting in this pile of **dirt**. And Jesus used his **spit** (action of shame) **dirt** (place of pain) to give him sight.

Listen, maybe **God is using your DIRT right now, so that you may be able to see him clearly**.

ALTER CALL