



**July 8, 2007**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

2 Kings 5:1-14

## “Can you listen?”

### **Can you listen to this story?**

This story begins with a man, a mighty warrior, Naaman, commander of the army of King Aram (2 Kings 5). Naaman had won many battles and was very popular with his king. He was an important man, decorated for military victories, in favor with the king.

But then the story takes a turn.

This man had leprosy. A mighty warrior but infected with a disease so devastating that his skin seemed to be rotting on his bones. He sought information about the disease and followed up on every possible suggestion of a cure without success.

A young girl, who was a slave taken in battle, lived and served Naaman's wife. One day the girl said to Naaman's wife:

*"If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy. (2 Kings 5:3)*

So Naaman's wife told Naaman, who then went to King Aram to receive permission to go to Samaria.

So Naaman departed with lots of gifts and a letter of introduction from his king. But when the king of Israel read the letter, he was distressed. "Am I God," he asked, "to give life or death that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" he was afraid that King Aram would send his armies to destroy Israel. He

thought. "The king of Aram is trying to trick me!"

But Elisha, a prophet of God heard of Naaman's arrival and sent word to the King of Israel "Stop tearing your clothes," he told the king. "You're not the only one around here. Send the man to me so that he may learn there's a prophet in Israel."

The mighty warrior with his chariots and horses and gifts of gold and silver went to Elisha's house. Oh, this is a great scene! Elisha didn't even come out of his house! He sent his servant out with a message for Naaman, the mighty warrior of king of Aram's Army. "Go, wash seven times in the Jordan and you will be clean." Well, Naaman wasn't used to this. Who did Elisha think he was?

This angered Naaman. He had come all the way to Samaria to be told to wash in a small river. Elisha did not even meet him. Naaman had no intention of washing in the muddy Jordan. He said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" So, the mighty warrior turned toward home. And that would have been the end of this story, except for the servants.

Naaman's servants were horrified with their master's behavior. "Father," they said, "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?'" So, Naaman turned around, went down to the Jordan, and immersed himself seven times. When he came out of the water that last time, he looked down at his hands and his feet. His flesh was like the flesh of a young boy.

What a great story! We could simply say it's a wonderful story, the kind of story you tell around the fire remembering God's acts among our ancestors.

But, think about this question. How could it happen? What made it possible for Naaman who suffered leprosy to be cleaned?

### **It was possible because he listened.**

Listen? What? The small voice of the people who didn't have power. This man, Naaman, great warrior, such a powerful man, could listen to them, a little slave girl and his servants.

Isn't it interesting it was two servants who helped in this healing process? This is not just their story. God is still using such powerless people to speak to us, the poor, the marginalized, even little children. God is speaking to us through those people to send his message.

### **Can you listen, when your children speak to you?**

**Can you listen when someone who does not speak your language fluently is trying to say something?**

**Can you listen when someone you dislike speaks to you?**

**If you don't, you may lose the opportunity to listen God's voice.**

Why can't we listen to their voice? What kind of obstacles disturbs us to listen to them? There are several things block our eyes and ears.

### **First, Power and authority**

As you know, it is very hard especially like Naaman, for those who have great power and authority to listen to someone.

When I was a military chaplain, I have had opportunities to talk with a commander, the head of a regiment. Once he told me, "pastor, I want to ask you something". I said, a little nervously, "Sure, tell me anything." He said, "no one tells me the truth. My people just tell me something I like to hear. It seems to me they are afraid of telling me the truth. I'm totally blind." But I didn't want to rat on others or spy for them. So, I told him, "I will not tell you because you ask me but because I think it is my job. But please remember why those people are not telling you the truth. Please let them know you are not the kind of person who they should fear. Please show them you are always welcome to listen to them whatever they say.

**Can you listen?**

### **Second, Knowledge and experience**

You know what? When you say, "I know that", you may not be able to listen to others. Every person has their own specialized area of knowledge. If someone is trying to tell you something about your area of expertise, you will be very uncomfortable.

But do you really think you know everything you need to know? Look at the man, Naaman, when he was told by the prophet Elisha to go to the Jordan River and wash his body, he was angered because in his knowledge and experience it was so ridiculous and stupid thing. He might have been knowledgeable about his disease. He might have tried so many things to cure his leprosy before he came to Elisha. "What? The Jordan River? Do you want me to wash in that a muddy, dirty river? I have seen so many beautiful rivers and great oceans all over the world."

But he listened. And God made him clean.

This story reminds us the Gospel story, the story of people of Jesus hometown who didn't welcome Jesus. Why did the people of Nazareth failed to listen to Jesus? Why did they try to kill him? They thought they knew this man, Jesus who grew up their town. They knew his family, his mother, brothers and sisters.

When you say, "I know that, I know you", but, sorry, you don't know anything because you don't listen.

### **Can you listen?**

#### **Third, pride and self confidence**

Naaman had everything he needed. He had power, authority, knowledge, and experience. All these kinds of things might give him pride and self confidence. He was the man of victories. But he couldn't do anything to cure his disease.

So, the Bible teaches us that

"If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)

### ***Can you listen?***

Listening is a real power. If you can listen to others, whoever they are, you can listen to God's voice and you will receive the power from God.

I have one thing that I really appreciate since I served at Baker. One day, I was told by one of our church members, "Pastor Doh, you are a great listener." Well, but he didn't know something about me, why I'm a good listener. I have to be a good listener because of my language skills. When I have a meeting or conversation with others, I am very often losing the chance to speak because they have already changed the topic, while I'm still thinking what to say.

It is not good. But I really thank you God for giving me this opportunity to listen for whatever reason. God gives me this wonderful experience I never would have had if I only spoke to Korean people. I have learned so many things since I began to listen. I was blessed. God is good all the time, all the time God is good.