

2 Kings 5

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[0 : 00] You can't have missed the banner as you were coming in to church this morning. If you did, I can only congratulate you on such a capacity to not see something that is so big.

So as you saw it, presumably you had a look to see what it was about. And we'll have discovered, had you not already known, that after Easter we are beginning another course of Christianity explored.

Maybe you'd like to come along. You're very welcome to do so. But perhaps for most of you, your most helpful involvement will be to invite others to take part.

That may involve coming with them. But nonetheless, your primary opportunity to be involved, as it were, will be in this way, inviting others to take part.

I wonder if you will. Now, I don't know the answer to that question, and probably you don't know the answer for sure at this point. But it might help you to have an indication as to what the answer might be to that question, will you invite somebody, to ask you if you did last year.

[1 : 16] Certainly those of you who were part of the congregation last year, when we had the same course, and you were encouraged to invite others, did you? That's a simple question to answer.

We all know the answer to it. And if you didn't, why not? And I just leave that with you to think about. And as you do maybe manage to have an answer to that question, keep it in mind as we proceed with what we are going to go on to say.

This morning, we're going to meet a little girl. We're going to meet a little girl who did extend an unlikely invitation, and an invitation that had, in due course, astonishing results.

And this little girl will be our teacher this morning. She will be our example. And we want to meet her and to learn from her.

And in order to do so, I'll invite you to open your Bibles in 2 Kings 5. It's on page 373 in the church Bible.

[2 : 25] 2 Kings 5, and we're going to read from verse 1 through to verse 14. The story is, I am sure, for many of you, a familiar one.

It's a very lovely story, and hence, memorable, and I imagine for many, very familiar. But we're going to read it, and this morning we're going to focus on one particular aspect of it, and that is this little girl who we are presented with, and the lessons that across the millennia she is still able to bring to us.

2 Kings 5, we'll read from the beginning through to verse 14. 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 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, Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said.

[3 : 52] 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? Make 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.

[5 : 00] 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 Farpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of 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.

The Word of God. There is just one question that I want to pose and answer this morning. The question is this.

[6 : 03] Why did this little girl invite Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria? Why did she do that? And as we find the answer, or as we try and discover what the answer might be, and by all means, as I suggest, what the answer is, see what you make of it yourself.

But as we would try and discover the answer to that question, I think we will also discover how the power of this little girl's example spans the time that has transpired and speaks to us, speaks to you, even this morning.

But before we do answer the question, let's try, difficult though it will be, to imagine something of the horror of the experience of this little girl as she endured what is described in verse 2.

We read there in verse 2, Can you imagine just for a moment what that experience must have been like for this little girl?

Her life had been, I imagine, a quiet and uneventful one, built around one ironclad certainty. She was part of a family that loved her, that cared for her, and that would protect her from anybody who might even think of harming her.

[7 : 41] I wondered if these raiding parties had come before. I wonder if she knew something about them. I wonder if she had said to her father one day, Might they ever come and take me? And might her father have responded, Don't worry, my little girl.

I will protect you. They won't take you. You're safe here in our home. But one fateful day, everything changed.

As she wandered in one of her father's fields, or perhaps as she dreamt sweet dreams in her humble home, a band of violent and brutal men snatched her away from all that she knew and loved.

Was she beaten or worse? Did she witness the fate of her father, who, futile though it was, tried to protect her? We don't know. We're not given that amount of detail.

We are perhaps spared the terrifying details of this horrendous experience that this little girl endured. Can you imagine?

[8 : 49] Imagine, and forgive me for even suggesting this, can you imagine if it was your daughter who was snatched away in this fashion?

It's every parent's nightmare. When we hear about a child that's been snatched, that's the way it's presented, isn't it? Every parent's nightmare. What would you think of the men responsible?

And think just for a moment of folk we seldom think about when we read this story. Think about her parents. As they discovered what had happened, or as they participated in this horrendous event, and were witnesses to their daughter being snatched from before them.

What a nightmare. Well, chance would be a fine thing, because this was no nightmare. It was a chilling reality for this little girl, as she was taken far away, far from all that she knew and loved.

And this is the little girl who invites her master, effectively her captor, to visit the prophet in Samaria.

[10 : 01] Why would she do such a thing? What do you think? Well, I think there are four strands to the answer that we want to suggest and learn from.

The first strand in the answer to that question, why? Why did she invite her master to visit the prophet in Samaria?

The first strand is this, that this little girl understood the gravity of her master's condition. What do we know about Naaman?

Well, we don't know a great deal, but what we do know, what we're told in this very passage, is very impressive. He was a military man of some stature.

He was experienced and successful in battle. He was a man with friends in high places. Indeed, he had a friend in the highest place. The king himself thought highly of him.

[10:59] He was highly regarded by the very king. No doubt, Naaman enjoyed the rewards that come with such success and good favor. He enjoyed prestige and influence and wealth.

He was, in effect, as he is described, a great man. He was a great man, we're told, in the sight of his master and highly regarded.

But the description we are given concludes with a sobering and tragic but, a dramatic and obscene but, but he had leprosy.

Yes, successful. Yes, wealthy. Yes, highly regarded. Yes, at the very height of his profession.

Yes, well thought of by all. But, but he had leprosy. Now, we don't know for sure the specifics of his condition.

[12:05] What we do know is that it was a grave and life-threatening affliction. Clearly, nothing could be done for him in Samaria. I imagine anything that could have been done would have been done, had already been tried.

Money was no option. The best doctors would have been available to him, but nothing could be done. The king of Israel further confirms for us the gravity of his condition.

And he does so in the manner that he responds to the request for healing. What does he say as he is presented with this leper seeking healing? Am I God?

Can I kill and bring back to life? You see, the request that was being made of the king was of that magnitude. He was being asked effectively to give somebody their life back.

And the king quite understandably responds, well, I'm not God to be able to do that. You see, Naaman was to all effects a dead man. It was just a matter of time.

[13:13] And the little girl, this little girl knew this. How did she know? Maybe it was evident for all to see. We don't know. Maybe her mistress confided in her.

We don't know. Maybe she overheard the anguished conversation of her masters. We don't know. But we do know is that she knew that Naaman was at death's door.

And she knew also that Naaman could do nothing to solve his problem. The king himself was impotent in the face of this calamity.

The little girl knew the gravity of Naaman's condition. And so, she invited him to visit the prophet in Samaria.

Now, let's stop there. And fast forward 3,000 years, give or take a couple of centuries. What about us? Do we, do I, do you, appreciate the gravity of the spiritual condition of those around you?

[14:21] Your relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues. Some, like Naaman perhaps, everything appears to be hunky-dory. A good job, a nice family, well-connected, well-adjusted, nice people.

And yet, does the description end with a sobering but? But far from God. But an unsaved sinner. But bound for a lost eternity. So much to say that is good, and yet, a sobering but that cannot be avoided.

Do we appreciate that? Do we grasp the gravity of the condition of all who do not know and trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

Do we grasp it? Do we feel it? Come, Holy Spirit, and melt our cold hearts.

[15:26] But you know, perhaps for some of you here this morning, the question is even more personal. Do you appreciate the gravity of your own condition? Never mind the condition of others.

Have you put your trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Have you recognized that you are a sinner that stands in need of forgiveness and Jesus alone is able to grant you that forgiveness? And have you sought that forgiveness as in repentance and faith you have come to Him? Do you appreciate the gravity of your own condition?

Why did the little girl invite Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria? Because she understood the gravity of his condition. And why must you, why must I, why must we who are believers take every opportunity to tell others of Jesus?

Well, does not the little girl teach us a lesson in that regard? But there's another strand to the answer to our question. And remember the question is why did this little girl invite Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria?

[16:40] Why did she do that? And there's a second strand as we answer the question and it is this, that the little girl was possessed of a surprising love for Naaman. She was possessed of a surprising love for Naaman.

You know, I imagine there were other slaves in Naaman's household. And perhaps they also had a clear understanding of his condition. He was a very different person. But responded perhaps in a very different way.

I wonder if any concluded that he was getting what he deserved. I wonder if any concluded, well, this was the judgment of God on this man who held them captive. We don't know. But we do know that that's not how this little girl thought.

She cares for this man. She wants to help. She loves this man. Now this is quite astonishing. He is her captor. He is in a very real sense the principal cause of her wretched misfortune.

But she loves him. She loves him in the sense that she wants the best for him. Let's not think of this love as necessarily a sentimental one, but a practical one. She wants the very best for him.

[17:47] And she knows that the very best for him is with the prophet in Samaria. And in that very real sense, she loves him. And so, she invites him to visit the prophet in Samaria.

And again, I would say, let's just stop there for a moment. Stop there for a moment and once again, fast forward 3,000 years. Do you love enough to tell others about Jesus?

To tell them who Jesus is. To tell them what he has done for sinners. To point them to the savior of sinners, to the friend of the friendless, the one who can grant them eternal life and restore them to a right relationship with God.

Do we love enough to do that? And what about those you could never reasonably be expected to love or care for?

Will you listen to this little girl and invite them? Yes, even them. Why did this little girl invite Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria?

[19:00] Because she was possessed of a surprising love for her master. There's a third strand to the answer to our question.

And it is this. This little girl enjoyed an unshakable confidence in what she was able to offer.

Let's recap for a moment. She knows Naaman is in deep trouble. Plenty people knew that. She wants to help. Some people would have shared those opinions or those desires.

Naaman's wife, his sons, the king himself, maybe his friends. But this girl, this little girl has something none of them have.

She has an answer. She has an answer that she is absolutely convinced will bring healing to Naaman.

[20:07] Notice the language that she uses there in verse 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.

Can you not just feel the confidence of this young girl? No. She is persuaded beyond any doubt that this is the answer to her master's calamity.

She doesn't say to her mistress, maybe if my master would go to the prophet in Samaria, he might be able to help. I believe he's helped others in the past and who knows, maybe he could help your husband.

She doesn't say, it's maybe worth a try, he's got nothing to lose, he's dying anyway. No, she doesn't say that. She doesn't even say, well, who knows, maybe if it's God's will there could be an answer for Naaman's illness.

No, not even that. She says, Naaman will be healed. The prophet will cure him of his leprosy. And I wonder if it was this confidence, this seemingly irrational faith that moved her mistress and persuaded even Naaman and the king.

[21:26] She was so sure. It was so real to her what she offered to her mistress. How could she be so confident? I pose the question, how could she be so confident?

I don't know if I know the answer in truth. It's difficult to avoid the conclusion that God Himself had granted this little girl in a very special way, a very special gift of faith that is reflected in the manner she is able with such confidence to provide this answer, to extend this invitation to her master.

And so, this little girl who enjoys an unshakable confidence in what she is able to offer invites Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria.

Stop there. Well, you know what's coming. Let's fast forward 3,000 years or so. You know the condition and the eternal destiny of those who do not know Jesus.

And you know that it is an awful one. You are concerned in a measure for such. But do you believe that in the gospel there is an answer suitable and sufficient for every sinner, for any sinner bar none?

[23 : 04] Are you persuaded that Jesus is able and willing to forgive and restore anybody and everybody? Are you gripped by an unshakable confidence in the power of the gospel to rescue and transform?

Can you echo the words of Paul that we read as he wrote to the Romans? That the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone, anyone who believes.

Do we have that confidence? Come Holy Spirit and grant us that confidence. We have reason to be so confident. Why do we lack so often that confidence?

Do we project that confidence or are we rather timorous and hesitant, even embarrassed at how others might respond to such childish and foolish conviction?

This little girl enjoyed an unshakable confidence in what she was able to offer and so she invited Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria.

[24 : 22] There is a fourth and final strand to the answer to our question, why did she invite him? The final thing we want to notice is this, is that the little girl has the guts and the guile to just do it.

First, the guts. Remember, this little girl is a slave. She's a Hebrew slave at that. She is to be seen and not heard. I wonder, in fact, if she's not even meant to be seen, never mind heard.

How to broach such a matter that was so much at the heart of this family's reality? To even extend the invitation that she extends, was it not potentially a dangerous thing to do?

We don't know enough about the dynamics of the situation to really know for sure. Might it be possible that the subject matter was taboo in the household? Everybody knew the condition that Naaman was suffering from, but nobody would say anything.

How might her mistress respond to the words that she addresses to her? Might she be angry? Might she reject the words of the little girl?

[25 : 38] But she had to speak. She had to speak. She had a message that could only be spoken. You see, the little girl couldn't say, well I'll try and be the best slave that my mistress has ever known.

I'll be the most humble, the most obedient, the most hard-working servant that my mistress has ever seen and that way I'll persuade her. That wouldn't have given the mistress the information she needed.

She needed to speak. She needed to tell her about the prophet in Samaria. She needed to verbalize these words. Silence was not going to be enough.

She needed to speak and so she spoke. Just in passing, this little girl reminds me a little of what we were seeing of Paul in Ephesus last week.

I think it was last week where we're told that he spoke boldly and remember we mentioned that this speaking boldly involved two elements. First of all, there was confidence in his message but there was also courage in the delivery and we find that here in this little girl confidence in the message and courage in the delivery.

[26 : 51] And maybe last week you were thinking well I'm no Paul. Yes, Paul spoke boldly but I'm no Paul. Well how about this little girl? Could you be like this little girl? She had the guts to speak and she had the guile also.

You see she can't speak to Naaman directly but she can find a moment, just the right moment, to speak to his wife and no doubt she waited for the right moment.

I wonder if she tried to say what she wanted to say once or twice. We don't know. But she waited for the right moment and wisely and winsomely she made her bold claim.

And so this little girl invites Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria. Now you know what's coming or I hope you do.

Let's just stop there and fast forward 3,000 years or so. Do you have the guts to speak? Do I have the guts to speak?

[28 : 01] Are you afraid to speak about Jesus? Yes, you trust in Jesus. Yes, you confess Him as your Savior. Yes, you are persuaded that He can save any and every sinner.

But are you afraid to speak? What will they say? What will they think about me? Do you have the guile?

Well, ask God for wise and winsome words, for the right moment and the right opportunity, but above all, just speak. Just do it.

Why did the little girl invite Naaman to visit the prophet in Samaria? She knew how grave was his condition.

She loved Him in an astonishing and surprising way. She had an unshakable confidence in what it was. She was able to offer this stricken man. And she had the guts and the guile to just do it.

[29 : 08] The result of the little girl's invitation? Well, you know the result. We need say no more. Let's pray. Amen.

. . After these you heard how you