Pentecost 21 2 Kings 5:14-27
October 17, 2021 339-401-306/477-316

Realize How Rich You Are – IN JESUS!
I. God's grace makes us grateful and generous.
II. God's faithfulness is the cure for greed.

Dear Christian friends,

Did you catch the connection between **today's readings** and the hymn we just sang? Don't feel bad if you **didn't**. AT FIRST I didn't see it either.

Hymn **#401** is what's called "The Hymn of the Day." Every Sunday HAS it's appointed Scripture readings AND its **"Hymn of the Day."** The Hymn of the Day is meant to emphasize the **point** of that day's readings. **"Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ"** would not have been MY FIRST CHOICE for today's Hymn of the Day.

Today's readings talk to us about the ROLE OF MONEY and things in our lives. We heard the call in the epistle reading, ***"Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have. For God has said: I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you."*** We saw that rich young man in the gospel reading WALK AWAY from Jesus because he didn't want to part with his ***"great wealth."*** And then we sang, "**Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ."**

I finally got the **connection between** those readings and that hymn. Walk away from Jesus and SEE JUST WHAT you're really giving up – Jesus' **perfect life** – **His cross** – **death** – **resurrection** – **promises**. Today's readings – that hymn – all **make the same point** – REALIZE HOW RICH You Are IN JESUS! **With this reading** we see that 1)God's grace makes us **grateful** and **generous** and 2)God's faithfulness is the cure **for greed**.

**I. God's grace makes us grateful and generous.**

**With this reading** we jump right into the MIDDLE of the story. **Naaman** was a powerful general serving a **powerful** king ruling over a **powerful nation**. Naaman had a LOT GOING FOR him but he had one DEVASTATING thing **going against** him – he ***"had leprosy."*** Leprosy was incurable back then and it led to a SLOW – PAINFUL – DISFIGURING death as bit by bit the **parts** of your body rotted away.

Naaman's wife had a servant – ***"a young girl taken captive from Israel."*** This girl told her **mistress** that the prophet Elisha could cure Naaman's leprosy. Naaman went to Elisha's house in Israel. Elisha didn't even go out to meet him. He sent this message to Naaman, ***"Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan (River), and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."*** All this REALLY TICKED Naaman off. He took Elisha as RUDE and **disrespectful**. Washing himself in the Jordan River was RIDICULOUS. But Naaman's servants convinced him to **give it a try** and that's where this reading PICKS UP. ***"Naaman went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said. Then his flesh was restored like the flesh of a small child, and he was clean."***

Naaman returned to Elisha HUMBLE – GRATEFUL – GENEROUS. He tells Elisha, ***"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. Now accept a gift from your servant."*** Naaman had brought along as a GIFT ***"ten talents of silver*** (750# of silver), ***six thousand shekels of gold*** (150# of gold) ***and ten sets of clothing."*** Although AT OTHER TIMES Elisha had accepted gifts from people THIS TIME he refused to take anything at all. Elisha wanted Naaman to understand that **God's blessings** are GIFTS OF GRACE given in love NOT BOUGHT at **whatever** price.

Naaman finally accepted **Elisha's refusal** but he was still determined to CONFESS his **new** faith. He would return home to Aram but he would not go back to worshipping the **idol Rimmon**. OFFICIAL

DUTIES might take him into Rimmon's temple but Naaman wanted Elisha and **all others to understand** that he NOW WORSHIPED ***"the LORD"*** as the only God ***"in all the world."*** Naaman had personally experienced God's **grace** and **goodness** and that made him GRATEFUL and GENEROUS.

Looking at these verses REALIZE HOW RICH you are IN JESUS! Each one of us – we were all suffering from a **disease** FAR WORSE **than the leprosy** that afflicted Naaman. Ever since the **fall into sin** ALL people are afflicted with sin. God is blunt with His DIAGNOSIS. ***"There is no one righteous; not even one. Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. Out of people's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual sins, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, unrestrained immorality, envy slander, arrogance and foolishness."*** There was no pill we could take – no surgery we could have – that would CURE us and give us ***"clean hands and a pure heart."*** The prognosis? ***"The wages of sin is death."*** We were TERMINAL sinners doomed to die condemned to hell's **eternal banishment** and punishment.

But look what God's GRACE DID for us! We have God's own Son as our **personal** Savior – our great Physician of body and soul. Jesus is God's answer – God's CURE – for our sin. Jesus lived for us that **whole life** of perfect love and obedience that we owed God. Jesus took the punishment for the sins of the whole world – Jesus suffered and died on the cross IN OUR PLACE to pay for all our sins **in full**. Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and He shares His victory with us. In your devotions this week GO BACK to hymn **#401**. Make it your "Hymn of the WEEK." "Your works, **not mine**, O Christ - Your cross – Your death – Your blood – Your **righteousness**. To whom but You …Lord, shall I flee?"

Realize how rich GOD HAS MADE you **in Jesus**! Trusting in Jesus **we have** God's forgiveness of **all** our sins – peace with God – a whole new relationship with God – the privilege of **prayer** – the comfort of God's **presence**, **promises**, **power** – eternal life in heaven the **very moment** we die – "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." ALL THE MONEY in the world couldn't buy a SINGLE ONE of those blessings. God gives them all to us BY GRACE through faith in Jesus. **Like Naaman** God's GRACE MAKES US grateful and generous.

**II. God's faithfulness is the cure for greed.**

I have a question for you. Have you ever asked God to **forgive you** for being GREEDY? Have you ever confessed to God that you were guilty of COVETING – breaking the 9th and 10th Commandments?

**Most people** probably don't see themselves AS GUILTY of being **greedy** or **coveting**. That young man in the gospel reading don't think he was greedy. He was a GOOD person. But when Jesus told him, ***"Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, …Then come, follow me"*** – then his greed was **revealed**. Faced with choosing between Jesus and his MONEY ***"he went away grieving, because he had great wealth."*** He wanted Jesus but NOT MORE THAN his money. **By the way** this man shows us why the Bible says ***"greed is idolatry."*** His money CAME BEFORE GOD in his heart. Whenever anything/one **comes before God** in our lives that's IDOLATRY. It doesn't matter what/who it is – MONEY, **self, sports**, work, etc. – it's breaking the very first commandment.

Greed and coveting are OPPOSITE SIDES of the same coin. **Greed** is always wanting MORE – not being satisfied with what **God has given** us. **Coveting** is WANTING SOMETHING we shouldn't have or can't get **properly**. Greed/coveting are TRICKY sins. They're not outward but INWARD sins. They're not seen by **anyone else** because they're sins OF THE HEART. **Greed/covering** are DANGEROUS sins. They're already sins and they EASILY LEAD to **more** sins as we can see with Elisha's servant **Gehazi**.

Gehazi couldn't believe that **his master** Elisha wouldn't accept ANYTHING from Naaman. ***"My master was too easy on this Aramean,"*** he thought to himself. Gehazi evidently saw what Naaman had to offer and **just** had to have some of it NO MATTER WHAT it took to get it. He's SO DETERMINED

to get his hands on some of it that he ever swears an oath – SINFULLY MISUSES God's name. ***"As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."***

Gehazi's greed SNOWBALLED into **more and more** sins. He lies to **Naaman**. He takes advantage of Naaman's GRATITUDE and GENEROSITY. Naaman has ***"two servants carry the two talents*** (150#) ***of silver and two sets of clothing"*** for Gehazi. But when they got CLOSE TO HOME Gehazi sends them on their way. He ***"hides the gifts"*** and obediently presents himself to Elisha. He lies to Elisha but doesn't get away with it. ***"Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever."*** Gehazi's sinful greed would ALSO AFFECT his family just as many PERSONAL SINS take their toll on the **rest of the family**. Gehazi wanted WHAT NAAMAN HAD – Gehazi ended up getting Naaman's leprosy.

**Repeatedly** the Bible warns us about greed and coveting. ***"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. You cannot serve God and Money." "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we certainly cannot take anything out. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be satisfied. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into complete destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evils. By striving for money, some have wandered away from the faith."***

The only cure for greed is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. Realize how rich God HAS MADE YOU **in Jesus**. That same God – ***"our Father in heaven"*** – promises to ***"give us this day our daily bread."*** He's promised to ***"meet all our needs."*** We have Jesus' command AND PROMISE, ***"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things*** (food, clothing, etc.) ***will be given to you as well."*** The cure for being greedy is TRUSTING God to keep those promises – AND HE DOES! The God who gave us His Son AS PROMISED will also take care of our **physical needs**. ***"He who did not spare His own Son,"*** Paul asked, ***"how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"***

Realize how rich GOD HAS MADE you **in Jesus**. That's the point of today's readings. That makes us GRATEFUL and GENEROUS people. When tempted to **be greedy** or **covet** go back to that hymn of the day with its refrain, "TO WHOM BUT YOU, …Lord, **shall I flee**?" Amen.

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