

Rev. Anne J. Scalfaro
6 November 2022

10:30 a.m. MT Worship
All Saints' Sunday

Calvary Baptist Church
Denver, Colorado

“The Extraordinary Stewardship of Ordinary Saints”

Third Sermon in the Five-Week Series: *Chronos & Kairos* (Part II of “Spirit of Curiosity”)

2 Kings 5:1-15a

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Have you heard the story about Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody? “There was an important job to be done. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.”¹

Stewardship is the opposite of That. Stewardship is when Everybody doing Something because Everybody knows they aren’t just Anybody, they are Somebody. Somebody who has Something to offer. And when Everybody offers what Nobody else can offer but them...miracles happen.

It is not just Elisha who heals Naaman. The healing of Naaman happens because of a chain of events involving multiple people. People who know they are Somebody who has Something to offer.

To see how each person plays a part in this story, we’ve got to break down Everybody into specific Somebodies.

First, we have Naaman. Naaman is a military commander in Aram, which is modern day Syria. Aram was one of Israel’s perennial enemies,² so Naaman not only represents a warrior with lots of wins under his belt, he’s also an *unwelcome outsider* to the people of God. Phillies fans might describe Naaman as Houston Astro’s pitcher Cristian Javier in Game 4 of the World Series.³ Someone who not only defeated them, but who did so with impressive and

¹ Lolly Daskal, “The Story of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody And Nobody,” *Lolly Daskal.com* accessed on Nov. 5, 2022 at <https://www.lollydaskal.com/leadership/story-everybody-somebody-anybody-nobody/>.

² Walter Brueggemann, *Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings* (Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc.: Macon, GA) 2000, pg 331.

³ ESPN staff, “Astros-Phillies World Series Game 4 highlights and takeaways,” *Espn.com* (2 Nov. 2022), accessed on Nov. 6, 2022 at

exceptional, record-setting skill. (And yes, though I am from Texas, I'm married to a Phillies fan, so you know who our house was rooting for! Alas.)

The interesting thing about Naaman though is that he has a dual identity in this story. He finds himself in an unusual place for a man of his social standing. He has a skin disease; a very visible illness that automatically makes him socially unacceptable. And so he is seeking healing.

Enter – a young girl from Israel who is serving Naaman's wife. We do not know her name. But we do know she has knowledge. Knowledge that Naaman needs. She knows of a prophet in Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel. A prophet with the power to heal. And this young girl, who has every reason NOT to share this knowledge because she was taken captive by this man, shares what she knows with her captor's wife. Her circumstances do not circumvent her compassion.

Then we have Naaman's wife. She does not speak in this story, however, we presume that she told her husband what the young

girl told her – because the next thing you know Naaman is going to the King of Aram (his boss) to ask for a leave of absence so he can go seek healing in enemy country...so he can go to the “Mayo Clinic” of biblical times, if you will.

And so, as the story goes, the King of Aram, says, “Sure, yes, go,” and “I'll even send with you a letter of endorsement for you to be healed.” This is great, except, the Aramean King mistakenly thinks that the Healer would naturally be the *King* of Israel. But that's not what the young girl said...she said she knew a *prophet*. But like many persons in power, the Aramean King made an assumption that healing would come from the most powerful person in Israel. He'd turn out to be wrong, but nonetheless, he gives his blessing to his top military commander to go to an enemy King to be healed...a humbling hit to his ego, admitting that the King of the country he defeated might have a power that he himself did not possess.

So Naaman heads to Israel – taking with him a ton of silver, gold, and garments, as well as

his letter of endorsement. He finds the King. As the King of Israel reads the letter – he freaks out; he misunderstands. He thinks something is being asked of him that he cannot provide, which hurts his pride. He thinks *he's* being asked to do the healing. It's a test he knows he can't pass; he assumes it's the Aramean King trying to rub salt in an already gaping wound by starting yet another fight.

Just when Naaman is probably assuming all hope is lost – enter Elisha. We don't know how Elisha finds out about what's going on – but he is a prophet after all. Elisha sends a message to the King and says, “Send Naaman to me, and I'll take care of his healing.”

So the King does just that. He gets a second chance to do the right thing and he passes on what he learns to Naaman. Naaman arrives at Elisha's home with all of his horses and chariots and gifts. He's expecting the royal treatment. But Elisha doesn't even come out of his house. He just sends a messenger out to Naaman who says, “Go wash in the Jordan River seven times.”

Well...Naaman is offended. This is not the “Abracadabra”

moment he imagined. He does not like the fact that Elisha doesn't give him the time of day, doesn't give him the dignity of coming out of his house to greet him in person; he doesn't like the fact that he's told to wash in a little ole muddy river called Jordan.

Naaman is about to forfeit his healing because of his disappointed expectations. Talk about prideful and picky! He could be cured of his skin disease and instead he's comparing rivers and complaining that he has to take a dip in tap water instead of Evian.

But here, enter – Naaman's entourage. These servants – unnamed though they are – *name* the obvious: “What are you thinking, man?!” They talk sense into their master, “All you have to do is dip in and out of water to be healed...this is like best case scenario! It's easy, free, accessible healthcare. No copay, no deductible. Just do it!” These servants are the collective voice of reason for Naaman who is clearly not thinking straight.

Naaman listens and follows Elisha's instructions and lo and behold – he's healed. It's a

miracle!...A miracle that took a multitude of people to happen. A miracle that leads Naaman to recognize the power of God.

A miracle that would not have happened if Everybody hadn't realized they were Somebody who had Something to offer. Ordinary gifts that once given, had Extraordinary impact. Gifts that not just Anybody had, *they* had: Knowledge. Access. Influence. A Second-Chance. Communication. Healing. Reason. Encouragement. Testimony. Gratitude. Wealth.

The young girl offered Knowledge – she knew there was a healer in Israel.

Naaman's wife offered Access. She had access to her husband – a man of power – in a way the young girl did not; she got the girl's knowledge to Naaman.

The Aramean King offered his Influence – a letter of endorsement so that the King of Israel would listen to Naaman.

The Israelite King doesn't immediately recognize or remember the gift he has to offer. He's thinking solely of what is right in front of him, not what other resources might be at his disposal. But he has a

Second Chance. God works through Elisha to wake up the King to what he's missing. The King learns something, and doesn't lose his Second Chance. That's his gift and he offers it; pointing Naaman toward Elisha.

Elisha's messenger offers the gift of Communication. He delivers Elisha's instructions for healing to Naaman.

Elisha himself offers the actual gift of Healing. He makes the diagnosis and writes the prescription for treatment.

Naaman's servants offer the gift of Reason and Encouragement. They talk sense into him and encourage him to not walk away angry, but humbly find healing.

And at the end of the story, Naaman offers his Testimony, Gratitude, and Wealth. He gives Testimony to the power of God, and Gratitude to Elisha by offering his Gifts of garments, gold, and silver.

These "ordinary people" in this story offer the gifts they have – gifts unique to them in This Moment – and it results in "extraordinary action": a healing.

Miracles are God's action in the world. And most of the time happen because of the Extraordinary Stewardship of Ordinary Saints.

All of us have something to offer to the work of God in the world in this moment. We hold ourselves back sometimes thinking that what we have to offer isn't enough, or won't make a difference, or isn't the right thing – or even worse – that Somebody Else will step up to the plate and our gift isn't needed. But Naaman's healing story shows us that Nobody else can offer what we can.

On All Saints' Day we celebrate the Extraordinary Stewardship of our Ordinary Saints here at Calvary. Certainly their cumulative financial gifts over decades have provided for us to be sitting in this beautiful sanctuary for worship or joining in worship via livestream. And yet they have gifts unique only to them that they offered too.

Bill Armstrong was **Fun-Loving** and shared that joy with everyone he was around.

Edythe Berglund was **Faithful in Serving** as a pastor's spouse nurturing relationships in each

of the churches she and Howard served.

Dave Crane was **Inquisitive and Curious**, always asking people about themselves. He knew how to make whoever he was talking to feel like the most important person in the room.

Jimmy Doolittle was **Artistic**, a creative wood spinner who could craft wood into a bowl, a purse, or a cowboy hat – all with meticulous care and beauty.

Barbara Ford was a **Contributing Citizen**, who is remembered for her work with the League of Women Voters, and for sharing of knowledge through her guide work of natural and historical sites.

Jack Fredericks was a **Storyteller** who could talk for hours, keeping you listening and losing track of time as he relayed the adventures of being a flight instructor for United.

Rev. Glenn Hill was a **Pastor to the Pastors**, one who embodied his favorite word – *Shalom* – as he nurtured and mentored other pastors with his peaceful presence.

Tyler Martinson was the **Life of the Party** who loved to make

those he loved smile with his quick wit and infectious laughter.

Topsy Miller was a **Musician** who loved choirs, and couldn't help but add a side of spunk to her singing.

Delores Moore was **Grateful**, appreciative of anything and everything done for her, especially by her family who she loved more than anything.

Royce Nation was **THE Community Member**, a life member of more groups and organizations than I can name: Shriners, Masons, Rotary, Habitat, American Legion, Royal Order of Jesters, Marine Corp, Board of Governors, Leukemia Society, March of Dimes, and more!

Carl Ramay was **Present**. Whether out on the lake, or here in the sanctuary – when he was somewhere, he was ALL there – with whoever he was with. And while he was there, he'd let you know the “right way to do things” with honesty and humor.

Ruth Shanklin was a **Celebrator**, sharing joy by writing everyone in the church a birthday card each year.

Now not a single one of these Calvary Saints would ever have dared called themselves a Saint while they were living. But that's just the thing...Saints are not Extraordinary because they think themselves as such. Saints are ordinary people who make an Extraordinary impact by offering what they have to give at the moment their gift is needed...whether that's a word of encouragement, a funny story, a birthday card, or a reminder to get out and vote (we hear you Barbara Ford!).

But it's not just about celebrating the gifts of other people, you know. Our own participation is *essential*...our own gifts.

Yes, Naaman had a myriad of people who made his miracle possible, but Naaman, too, had to participate in his own healing. He didn't recognize this at first, of course. He was upset when his healing didn't happen the way he thought it would. As a military commander, Naaman was used to being the one who called the shots; he was used to having things done FOR him. Yet here in this moment, he has to do something FOR HIMSELF. He has to participate in his own healing; he has to

physically wash himself seven times in the Jordan River.

Calvary, we too, must participate as miracle makers in this world. We are God's "Abracadabra!" God needs us to get up and go wash in the Jordan River...or follow whatever metaphorical instructions God is giving us to bring about healing for ourselves and our world.

Commitment Sunday is next week. We are all Ordinary Saints, but we have the opportunity to come together and exercise Extraordinary Stewardship. Your giving and my giving is crucial to the chain of events that create Calvary's ministry...and Calvary's ministry is crucial to the change of events that bring about God's kin-dom come on earth as it is in heaven.

And I get it. These are extraordinary times. The market is not measuring up, inflation is challenging for all of us, the church included. For the past two years, Calvary has had the support of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans – support we will not have this year. All of our expenses are rising; I don't have to tell you this; you live it every day. We

all shop at the same grocery store. But we can do this Calvary. If we each look at what we have been given by God, and view our gifts through the urgent lens of accomplishing a healing act in the world that is needed RIGHT NOW...we will give RIGHT NOW...as if that healing won't happen unless we participate. Because the truth is, it won't. Can we see Naaman's healing as a metaphor for the healing that Calvary brings to the world? How it takes all of us to make the miracle happen?

Damon and I will be sitting down to have the same conversation this week that I pray you will be having too: How much is God calling us to give to Calvary? Many things in our financial life are unpredictable: the up and down post-pandemic nature of the restaurant industry, supply chain issues in Damon's small business, my salary being dependent on what all of us give to Calvary each year (something we don't know when we make our pledge each fall).

Like you all, we will be seeing how we can stretch ourselves to give generously to this place that gives us so much. Not just because Calvary enriches our lives, although you all do, but

because we believe God is at work through the ministries of Calvary in miracle-making ways.

Some of us experienced such miracles in a powerful way as volunteers from Calvary and New Hope showed up to an excited and eager room of third graders at Stedman Elementary School to begin our reading program again.

Jennifer, one of the volunteers from New Hope, was paired with a student whose aunt was shot and killed last week. Jennifer is a retired music teacher who has worked with a variety of students for years, some of which had experienced something similar, and she knew how to respond in a way that welcomed the girl's grief and helped her process such a fresh, violent loss.

Marian, another volunteer from New Hope, was a bit nervous about reading because she has a unique speech pattern that makes her diction pronounced. Marian didn't let that deter her though, she showed up. And she was paired with a student who was blind. The girl read aloud the first page of the book, her fingers tracing the brail on the page. Then it was Marian's turn.

As she read, the girl said, "Excuse me?...What's going on with your voice?" This was the very thing Marian had worried about. But she nervously, yet courageously said, "Well, I have a unique speech pattern." The girl said, "Oh, then you and I are alike because I'm blind and I cannot see." They sat in silence for a moment; connecting over their difference that made them alike.

And as I was going through the introductory worksheet with the 8 year old girl I was partnered with, one of the questions said "list something you'd like your reading partner to know about you." I could tell my student was struggling to come up something. I said, "it's okay, you can think about what you want to write down and we can come back to it later." She said, "I know what I want you to know about me, I just don't know how to write it." I said, "what do you want me to know?" She answered, "My mom died when I was four." Her eyes looked up at me – soft and curious, almost waiting to see how I would react. I smiled and said, "Tell me about your mom." She lit up and started listing off all these things: "My mom was silly. My mom was kind. My mom was beautiful My mom was THE

BEST MOM EVER.” She then said, “I like you. Most people ask me how my mom died, but you asked me who my mom was.”

We turned back to the worksheet. I asked my student what her mom’s name was so we could write it on the sheet. She told me her name. I said, “how do you spell that?” She looked down, worried for a minute and said, “ Well, I don’t know how you would spell it but I spell it M-O-M.” This 8 year old girl, reminded me of the most important thing about the ones we love and lose --- who they were to us and how they touched our lives.

There is no way in a classroom of 20-30 students, that one teacher could be present to the unique needs of each student in that classroom. But because of our reading volunteers – we showed up – ordinary saints (bringing our unique life experiences and gifts) – and we collectively discovered extraordinary moments of human connection. This is what Healing looks like. This is the kin-dom of God. This is what we do. This is who God created us to be and how God has equipped us to serve and these are the miracles to which God is

calling us to give. All of us. Everybody.

Because while these ordinary moments in Naaman’s story or at Stedman Elementary all happen in Chronos time...the miracle of Healing that happens in these moments is a glimpse of the glory of God in Kairos time. The time when all will be healed – all will be joined in heaven and earth. The communion of saints together. What our ancestors are experiencing now and what we hope to experience with them soon – this coming together – we’re told in scripture it is possible in the Here and Now.

Naaman was looking UP for a miraculous act, a quick fix, when really he needed to look AROUND and WITHIN to find God’s miracle stirring...just waiting for Everybody’s stewardship to surface.

So what do you say – Ordinary Saints – do you want to make some Extraordinary miracles happen? Tis the season.

Amen.