

Remnant Life Church  
May 5, 2024  
**When God Surprises Us**  
II Kings 5:1-14

There are those who say they cannot be caught off guard, cannot be surprised

- Well, I don't believe that for a second
- The very definition of surprise is *the feeling caused by something unexpected or unusual*
  - Even if you don't show it, the feeling is still present
- And of course, a surprise can be either of the good or the bad kind
  - Coming into a windfall of unexpected money is a good surprise
  - Finding out you owe the IRS several thousand dollars when you were expecting a return is a bad one

Surprises also come to us in many forms

- Some are in the form of events like finding out you have been suddenly promoted at work
- Others are in the form of people, such as coming face-to-face with an old friend
- Still, there are times we receive news or a revelation that will surprise us
  - It was the day before Thanksgiving when an elderly man in Phoenix called his son in New York and said to him, "I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are getting a divorce. Forty-five years of misery is enough. We're sick of each other, and so call your sister in Chicago and tell her." The son frantically called his sister, who exploded on the phone. "Oh, this is not going to happen!" she shouted, "I'll take care of this." She called Phoenix immediately and said in her most I'm-in-charge-voice, "Dad, you are NOT getting divorced. Don't do anything until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be there tomorrow morning. Until we arrive, don't do a thing...DO YOU HEAR ME?" The father quietly agreed to her order, hung up his phone, and then called out to the other room. "Okay, honey, the kids will be here for Thanksgiving, and for a nice change this year, they're paying for their own flights."

Well, the very nature of surprises means that there is little or no warning

- I experienced that in a very profound way in my own life
- It was one year ago yesterday, while cutting the grass on a Friday afternoon, I had my heart attack
  - No warning
  - Nothing that would suggest I was headed in that direction
  - I checked off every box of someone with the lowest possibility of that occurring
  - Yet, I found myself, at 3:00 a.m. the next morning, lying in a hospital bed, not knowing for sure what the next couple of days would bring
  - Needless to say, that caught me by surprise

The Bible is filled with surprises, and we read how those who were involved responded

- In **Ex 3:3**, Moses is lying face down on the ground, having encountered a bush that was burning, yet was not being consumed, with the voice of God emanating from it – that was surprising!

- Abraham and Sara are having a baby at the ages of 100 and 90 – that was probably a surprise (**Gen 17**)
- Those standing around the tomb of Lazarus were surprised when he came walking out (**John 11**)
- Certainly, the disciples were very surprised when Jesus was suddenly standing in the room with them with the door closed and locked following His crucifixion. (**John 20**)
- And His ascension into heaven that we read of in **Mark 16** was not expected

Strange or unique encounters with another person can also catch us by surprise

### **READ - 2 Kings 5:1-14**

This story is a familiar one

- There are 4 main characters with each demonstrating an aspect of behavior that we can learn from although we will be focusing on only 2 this morning
  - Elisha is the man of God who simply does what God tells him to do
  - His servant, Geh-ahas-hechi, who allows greed to get the best of him and suffers consequences for the rest of his life
  - Naaman is an Aramean, the commander of the army of that nation and a very powerful man
  - The Israelite slave girl, not named in the account, who points Naaman to the healing power of God
- There is one other participant also present, although not a person but a condition – leprosy
  - The very word would strike terror in the hearts and minds of the people of that day.
  - Partly due to the fact that they had limited knowledge of the disease
  - Second, because the word leprosy was used for any type of skin condition regardless of the severity

Let's consider Naaman for a moment and realize something that is easy to miss

- It was God who gave Naaman his military victories (**2 Kings 5:1**)
  - This may seem quite strange considering that, first, Naaman was not an Israelite
  - Second, he was a man who led the Aramean forces against Israel, God's people
    - **1 and 2 Kings** repeatedly show that God is sovereign over all nations and all peoples
    - He also repeatedly used those pagan nations as an instrument of His judgment over the people of Israel when they refused to turn from their wicked ways and idol worship
    - This was no different
      - The ancient historian Josephus even suggests that it was Naaman who fired the arrow that killed the king of Israel
      - That was King Ahab – one of the most wicked of all the kings during that time

But then there is the one who would influence Naaman but was a person of no value at that time

- The little slave girl could not have been more different than the great military man
  - She an Israelite, he an Aramean
  - She was a child who was a maid; he was a mighty warrior
  - She lived in captivity while he was her captor
  - Her king had been killed, and the nation of Israel scattered; he was well-known and highly respected by his king (**2 Kings 5:1**)
- But the lowliness of her position did not translate to her faith
  - She had faith that, even today, would have been uncommon
  - The reason I say that is because of what she told her master regarding Naaman's condition
    - **Read – 2 Kings 5:2-3**
    - Here is what makes that so unusual
      - The law of Moses in **Lev 13** gives detailed instructions on what was to be done with someone who had a skin disease called leprosy – inspected by the priest and removed from camp to heal
      - There are also instructions in **Lev 14** on what to do when a person is cured of leprosy – priest inspection, purification rites, and a sacrifice
    - But in the entire OT, there is not one recorded case of a Hebrew person being miraculously healed of leprosy
      - She was speaking in faith alone since she had never seen or heard of it being done before
      - But that is the very definition of faith...
      - **Heb 11:1** - *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*
  - Naaman did not understand what it meant to be healed by God
    - He was an idol worshipper who believed the favor of the gods had to be earned or purchased
    - You can see that by how he approaches Elisha
      - In verse **5** we see that he has brought gifts to buy his healing
      - And it is quite a gift
        - 750 pounds of silver
        - 150 pounds of gold
        - Today's value for them combined is nearly 4.4 million dollars
        - And he even threw in a new wardrobe to seal the deal
  - But Naaman had something else to deal with besides the leprosy – his great pride
    - Look what happens
    - **Read - 2 Kings 5:10-12**
      - First, it started badly because Elisha did not even come out of the house himself – he sent his servant
      - Second, the instructions were too simple
        - Surely there would be a big production
        - Waving hands, loud shouts, maybe a bolt or two of lightning and some booming thunder

- Then, the greatest insult of them all, he is told to go down and get into a muddy river that looks like a barnyard run-off compared to the beautiful waters of his homeland
- Consider that Naaman was lucky that word even got to Elisha
  - **READ – 2 Kings 5:7**
  - You do need to keep in mind that Ahaziah was the king and he was the son of Ahab
  - The rotten apple had not fallen far from the tree
  - Of course, his first concern was for himself and not the opportunity for the power of God to be displayed
- Naaman’s pride was about to derail something that would change his life
  - How often have we allowed our pride to do the same thing?
  - Afraid of looking foolish
  - Afraid of what others might think or say
  - Worried about our reputation
- Then, consider the contrast between Naaman and the slave girl
  - Naaman was filled with pride
  - The girl was filled with compassion and concern when she had every right not to be
    - Think about her circumstances and then ask yourself if you would have been able to do the same
    - This man was responsible for her being taken from her home, her family, and her people
    - She lived at the whim of her masters
    - Slaves were not pampered and lived her life not as her own but only to please her masters
    - She had every right to have the attitude of, “Good! I hope he suffers for a long time and then dies!”
    - But she did not
      - Corrie Ten Boom was taken and separated from her mother and father and imprisoned in a German concentration camp during WW II. Her crime was helping Jews escape from Nazi Germany. She not only experienced the horrors of life as a prisoner of the Reich, but she watched her sister Betsy die of weakness brought on by starvation in their flea-infested barracks. She would never be reunited with her parents and could have easily died a bitter old woman, filled with hatred for her captors. Instead, she became God’s apostle of forgiveness. God taught her to forgive the very men who were responsible for her suffering and the deaths of her sister and parents. Then, He sent her to the world with her story of forgiveness and God’s message of forgiveness for all who are trapped by the chains of unforgiveness.
      - This little slave girl demonstrated that same loving strength and God used her as instrument to accomplish His will.

- But God's will was not just about Naaman's body; it was also about his heart
  - God changed Naaman from the inside out
  - Yes, his skin was healed so that it was like that of a young boy (5:14)
  - But he also renounced his idol worship and proclaimed that only God was God (5:15)
  - His transformation was so complete that it even changed how he felt about the world around him
    - He started out by speaking against the rivers and land of the Israelites and how they could not compare to those in Damascus
    - He ends up asking permission to take a load of dirt back home with him to make an altar to offer sacrifices to God (5:17)
- Naaman leaves a changed man
  - He is clean physically with his leprosy healed
  - But he is also a humbled man as he refers to himself as 'your servant' when talking with Elisha before he leaves (5:17)
- This transformation does not take place without the involvement of a surprising participant
  - A slave girl who had every right to be angry, bitter, and delighted that her captor was inflicted with the most feared disease of the day
  - Elisha did what God told him to do
  - Naaman recognized the change that took place in his life
  - The little girl was the powerful instrument used by God

What do you do when God surprises you?

- Do you think like the king of Israel trying to figure out how it is going to impact you?
- Or do you embrace the opportunity, as Naaman did, even if it means you need to dip yourself in a muddy river 7 times?
- Never set your mind in a way that limits what God will do