

Catechism Story 37

*The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
Memory Verse and Catechism Prayers from the Congregation at Prayer*

BIBLE STORY: NAAMAN'S LEPROSY IS CLEANSED

2 Kings 5:1-16

Central Thoughts

- God's Word alone gives the power of Christ's forgiveness to the water of Holy Baptism.
- Repentance and faith in Christ is a miracle of God's Word.
- Naaman's disease of leprosy was a sign of the corruption of sin.
- Naaman could not save himself by his works or his money; his self-righteousness and pride had to be put to death in him, so that he could receive the gift of cleansing that God's Word had given to the water of the Jordan River.
- Faith receives what the Word of God promises.
- The account of Naaman illustrates the meaning of the Catechism's question: "How can water do such great things?"

Discussion Questions

Who was Naaman?

*He was the commander of the army of Syria, a great and honorable man in the eyes of his king.
He was a mighty man of valor, but he was also a leper.*

What had the Lord given to Syria through Naaman?

Victory over Syria's enemies.

Who took the credit for Syria's victories?

Naaman.

What had Naaman brought back from the land of Israel from one of his raids?

An Israelite girl whom he made a slave for his wife.

How did the young girl show her faith in the Lord?

She wished that her master, Naaman, would see the prophet Elisha in Israel who would heal him of his leprosy.

Why didn't the slave girl hate Naaman?

She believed in the Lord and trusted in His mercy and grace for all people.

What did the king of Syria do when he learned of the possibility that Naaman could be healed of his leprosy?

He sent him to the king of Israel with silver, gold, royal clothing, and a letter asking for the king to heal Naaman.

What did Naaman hope to do with all of this silver and gold?

Buy his healing.

What did the king of Israel assume the king of Syria was doing?

He thought he was trying to pick a fight with Israel, and he was afraid of Syria.

What did Elisha do when he learned that the king of Israel had torn his clothes in despair?

He sent a messenger to the king, requesting that Naaman be sent to him so that Naaman might know that there is a prophet of the Lord in Israel.

What does a prophet do?

A prophet speaks forth God's life-giving and saving Word.

What did Elisha do when Naaman appeared at his door with great fanfare, and all his soldiers, servants, and wealth?

He sent a messenger to him with the Lord's Word, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean."

Why did Naaman become so furious with Elisha?

Naaman worshiped himself, he trusted in his power, position, wealth, and all his accomplishments. He was arrogant and full of pride. He boasted in the rivers of Damascus as being better than the muddy Jordan River. He also believed that Elisha had disrespected him by sending a lowly servant to him.

How did Naaman's servants respond to his rage?

They said to him, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean.'"

What did Naaman finally do by the Word of the Lord spoken to him by lowly servants?

He dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the Word of the Lord and he was healed. His flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

What had been given to Naaman through this cleansing?

The gift of forgiveness and salvation from the Lord.

How did this gift of forgiveness and salvation come to Naaman?

By water and the Word of God, just as Baptism "does great things" by the Word of God that is "in and with the water."

What did God put to death in Naaman, so that he would receive the gift of God in the water of the Jordan?

His self-righteousness and pride.

What gave the water of the Jordan the power to cleanse Naaman?

The Word of God.

What did God's Word call Naaman to?

Repentance for his sin and faith in the Lord's Word in the water of the Jordan

Meditation on the Bible Story

Naaman was a self-righteous, proud, and arrogant man who had trusted in himself—his power, position, and wealth. It was really the Lord who had allowed him to gain his victories over Israel, but he took all the credit for himself. The disease of leprosy is a picture of the disease of sin. It permeates every part of our lives. Like leprosy, the disease of sin makes us unclean, separates us from God, and brings about our death. We must be cleansed. The cleansing of Naaman in the water of the Jordan River is a wonderful picture of Holy Baptism. How can Holy Baptism cleanse us from sin and restore life with God through His forgiveness? "Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit." The prophet Elisha absolutely would not allow Naaman any thought that he could buy his salvation from leprosy by his works, money, position, or power. The Word of God had to humble Naaman, killing his self-righteousness and pride, so that he would receive the gift of God through repentant faith and not by his works. Three times lowly servants brought the Word of the Lord to Naaman: the slave girl from the land of Israel, Elisha's servant, and finally Naaman's own servants. By the grace of God, Naaman was called to repentance, and he washed in the Jordan according to God's Word and his flesh was completely restored like that of a little child.

Naaman was not only cleansed of his leprosy, but he was also cleansed of his sin and confessed faith in the God of Israel. The power of Baptism is in the Word of God. Faith receives the gift and the Word of God both calls us to repentance and bestows the forgiveness and cleansing that is found in the water.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Heavenly Father, as You saved Naaman the leper from his self-righteousness and pride and brought him to the cleansing water of the Jordan River by Your Word, call us to repentance each day for our sin and teach us to believe in the promises of our Baptism for the comfort and assurance of Your salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Naaman's Leprosy is Cleansed
2 Kings 5:1-14