

## Kingdom Politics 5: Purchasing Power & the Power to Purchase

(2 Ki 5.1-19)

*Tim's notes are in italics. Type [bit/ly.nlnemu](#) into any browser for a series overview.*

### **Getting Started:**

A key point of our previous Kingdom Politics session was that in the secular world the principle is to eradicate evil as a first priority. In contrast, God's principle for his people is to insert good as a first priority and leave the evil for him to deal with eventually. Since then, I ran across two quotes:

- Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate can't drive out hate; only love can do that. – Dr. Martin Luther King
- The proper antidote to bad culture is good culture. – Andy Crouch in *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling*

Got any further thoughts about this? – *For instance, if God asked you which evil in today's world you'd like him to eradicate right now, what would it be?*

### **Background & Context:**

Do you remember who wrote 2 Kings and the situation at the time of writing? – *Jeremiah wrote this history around 580BC, about 270 years after the events occurred. It's like someone today doing the research and writing the history of the French & Indian war. Jeremiah wrote this history for the Jews who were deported to servitude in Babylon and the Jews left-behind in Jerusalem because they were useless to Babylonia.*

### **Let's read the scripture for today: 2 Kings 5.1-19**

1-6

What's your first impression of the slave girl? The mistress? Naaman?

Why did Naaman go to the king instead of straight to Elisha? – *1) He probably needed a leave-of-absence. And 2) Naaman was a commander in the King's army, so he thought hierarchically, top-down.*

In today's dollars, what was the value of the silver and gold? – *\$189,120 silver, \$3,145,200 gold, \$1,000 clothing = \$3,335,320 total*

What do you make of v1 saying the Lord gave victories to Israel's enemies? – *Jeremiah wrote 2 Kings 270 years after the events. He wrote it for his Jewish brothers and sisters who were living as slaves/captives in Babylon and for the "rabble" that Babylon left behind in Jerusalem. In addition, before Babylon sacked Jerusalem, Jeremiah wrote lots of prophecy telling his compatriots that they should surrender to Babylonia because the Lord had arranged for Babylon to overrun them as discipline for their betrayal. This is a recurring theme: the Lord let's bad things happen, and sometimes even causes bad things to happen, as a form of discipline - and virtually always in to reset their relationship with him.*

7-12

What do you think of Elisha's poor hospitality? – *Maybe it was God's first step in dealing with*

*Naaman's pride and world-view.*

Why did Naaman get frustrated when Elisha didn't go out to meet him and his entourage? – *Naaman had gone to a lot of trouble to put together a grand show of importance and wealth. He had come to purchase his salvation. But the merchant was completely ignoring all of this.*

13-16

What do you make of the interchange between Naaman and his men? – *I'm impressed that his men had the courage to speak sense to him. And I'm impressed that Naaman had the sense to listen and humility to follow their advice. It speaks well of all of them.*

What do you make of v15-16? – *Does this remind you of any New Testament story? [Luke 17.11-19](#), where Jesus heals 10 lepers and only one returns, and he was a Samaritan!*

17-19

So how do you think about this last interchange, and especially v18-19? – *I've used this story to counsel a few people who have come into Christian faith from Asian folk religious backgrounds. One day a Chinese new Christian came to me with a dilemma. Her relatives were coming from China for an extended visit and they wanted her to host them on a gambling trip to Las Vegas. So I shared this Elisha story and gave her permission. I've also used it in cases where a Christian needs to participate in a family funeral or the ongoing annual events of ancestor worship in the Asian folk religious world. Essentially, my counsel is to show up at these events but ask the Lord, at the moment, how to honor him as you navigate your way through and around the awkward situation. On the one hand, you can't fully participate in worshipping the ancestor, but you can honor them with your presence and usually in some other ways (flowers, food, etc.). The outcome usually is that the family notices that you are not fully participating out of a conscious sense of commitment to your beliefs, but you are honoring the situation. This often results in a positive spiritual conversation then, or later.*

### **Connecting to life:**

What advice comes from this story that informs our engagement in today's world? – see table below. For the third point, pass out the [Responsive Prayer Meditations - C 6 Epiphany - Wednesday](#).

**Summary for today** (For an up-to-date summary for the series so far, see website: [bit.ly/nlncmu](http://bit.ly/nlncmu):

| The world of kings                                               | The world of God's Kingdom                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Ignore the advice of the powerless and meek.                     | Listen to the powerless and meek.                   |
| Favor comes with a price tag, so bartering for favor is natural. | Favor is offered freely, making barter unnecessary. |
| Practice trickle-down economics.                                 | Anticipate bubble-up economics.                     |

### **Frances' moment:**

**Prayer.**

## 2 Kings 5:1-19 New Living Translation (NLT)

### *The Healing of Naaman*

The king of Aram had great admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the Lord had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy.

2 At this time Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid. 3 One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

4 So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said. 5 "Go and visit the prophet," the king of Aram told him. "I will send a letter of introduction for you to take to the king of Israel." So Naaman started out, carrying as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing. 6 The letter to the king of Israel said: "With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy."

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7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, "Am I God, that I can give life and take it away? Why is this man asking me to heal someone with leprosy? I can see that he's just trying to pick a fight with me."

8 But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes in dismay, he sent this message to him: "Why are you so upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel."

9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house. 10 But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of your leprosy."

11 But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the Lord his God and heal me! 12 Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

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13 But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go and wash and be cured!'" 14 So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child, and he was healed!

15 Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and Naaman said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."

16 But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept any gifts." And though Naaman urged him to take the gift, Elisha refused.

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17 Then Naaman said, "All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the Lord. 18 However, may the Lord pardon me in this one thing: When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there and leans on my arm, may the Lord pardon me when I bow, too."

19 "Go in peace," Elisha said. So Naaman started home again.

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