

**Sunday, October 16th, 2016**

*The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:40am. After a brief prayer with the choir, the liturgist will enter and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....*

*The preacher will then ask...*

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.

**PRELUDE** "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"- Charles Callahan Dr. Elizabeth Davis  
**CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP** "This Is the Day!" Dan Dykema The Choir

*After the choir is finished, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 37 and printed in our bulletins?”

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (adapted from Psalm 37:1-6)

Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers,

**For they will soon fade like the grass, & wither like the green herb.**

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.

**Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.**

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.

**He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Our Father, show us by your Word and Spirit the way to open our hearts to you and to others. Calm our worries, and show us how to seek your kingdom and its righteousness above all things. Feed us and clothe us with your truth so we may trust you in every circumstance, be truly content in this life as well as the next, and live in your eternal peace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand and join in singing the hymn, “Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim”, number 477 in our *Hymnals*.

*The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.*

\*HYMN OF PRAISE “Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim” *The Hymnal #477*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...*

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

The Scriptures invite us to come out of the shadows where we have tried to hide all that is not right in our lives. Let us confess our sins and come into the light of God’s love where we may find forgiveness. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its end for a brief period of silent prayer and reflection. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, we confess that we have not fulfilled the trust you have given us as servants of Christ and stewards of your mysteries. Comfort, security, and a place of honor have become more important to us than your approval and trust. We have come to see our possessions as our rightful rewards for our service to you rather than as tools to be used in your service. Deliver us from falling in love with the things of time, and teach us that we may come to love the things that endure. Free us from false gods that enslave so that we may freely serve and love others in Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION (*Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.*)

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “Rely on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Friends, believe the Good News!

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

\*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

*Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;*

*As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.*

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

We have been reconciled to the Father by the gift of his Son. Let us now be reconciled one with another and share the peace of Christ. The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.*

*After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...*

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Pastor Mike.”

*The liturgist will take a seat.*

CHILDREN’S SERMON

*(All Singing)*

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;  
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;  
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.***

Hold up a simple maze, and ask the children if they have ever solved one. Find out what is hard about them, and what is fun about them. Take a marker or crayon, and with the children's help, begin to work your way through an easy maze.

Suggest that life is like a maze in that sometimes we make wrong turns. In the Scripture lesson from 2 Kings, a man named Naaman was looking for a cure for his skin disease, but it was hard for him to find healing. At first he refused to follow God’s instructions, but then he did what he was told and he was healed. As long as we stay within the lines he gives us, then when we take a wrong turn, we can turn around and try another way. We can be like Naaman, who followed the directions of God's prophet Elisha and was healed. The important thing is to stay on God's path, not get scared when we hit dead ends, and trust that God is leading us to a final destination at the end of the maze with him.

*As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore”, #377 in our hymnals.”

\*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore”

The Hymnal #377

*After the hymn, the preacher will return to the pulpit and say,*

“**Please be seated...** We are in the middle of our annual Stewardship Emphasis Season. We have a new video this year explaining the biblical basis for the tithe entitled, “First Fruits”.

**A MINUTE FOR STEWARDSHIP**

**Video #1 - “First Fruits”**

*After the video, the Liturgist will step to the microphone and say....*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

As followers of Christ, we are called, not to give until it hurts, but to give until it feels good. We must stretch ourselves in giving until we feel its joy. In that spirit, let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

*The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.*

THE OFFERTORY

**"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"**

**Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

\*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

*After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... Gracious God, you have blessed us with all that we need and often more than we need. Help us receive what you give with grace. In turn, help us be generous — with our monetary gifts, our possessions, our talents, and our time. We ask that you would accept and consecrate all these gifts to

further your work in the world. Amen.

**THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.*

**THE ANTHEM**

**"Make My Life an Alleluia" - Ruth Elaine Schram**

**The Choir**

*After the soloist finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the seventeenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, beginning at the seventh verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 910 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

*The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.*

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*When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...*

Our sermon text today is taken from the fifth Chapter of the Second Book of Kings, beginning at the fifteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #323 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him; and he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant."

But he said, "As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused.

Then Na'aman said, "If not, I pray you, let there be given to your servant two mules' burden of earth; for henceforth your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter."

He said to him, "Go in peace." But when Na'aman had gone from him a short distance, Geha'zi, the servant of Eli'sha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Na'aman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him, and get something from him."

So Geha'zi followed Na'aman. And when Na'aman saw some one running after him, he alighted from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?"

And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of E'phraim two young men of the sons of the prophets; pray, give them a talent of silver and two festal garments.'"

And Na'aman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two festal garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they carried them before Geha'zi. And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand, and put them in the house; and he sent the men away, and they departed.

He went in, and stood before his master, and Eli'sha said to him, "Where have you been, Geha'zi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere."

But he said to him, "Did I not go with you in spirit when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, menservants and maidservants? Therefore the leprosy of Na'aman shall cleave to you, and to your descendants for ever." So he went out from his presence a leper, as white as snow.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

“The Rest of the Story”

The focus of our lesson this morning is the little known biblical figure of Gehazi, the servant of God's servant Elisha. His story begins after the healing from leprosy of the more familiar figure of Naaman, Commander in Chief of the Syrian army.

"You must accept some gift," the grateful general tells Elisha after his healing.

Elisha said, "No. I did not do the healing, my Lord God of my Father did that, and he has no need of gold and silver."

So Naaman begins the long journey home with all his considerable wealth and 2 mules carrying dirt from Israel, so that for the rest of his life he may kneel on the good earth of this blessed land and worship the one true God, the God of Israel.

But the servant of Elisha, Gehazi, can't stand it. He has been faithful to God and to Elisha for all these years. He has lived on hand me downs, castoffs, and left overs for his entire adult life. And now that Elisha has had a chance to make his life just a little bit easier, he has refused. It's not fair. And then the most dangerous thought in the world enters his mind, "I DESERVE more!"

Jesus has warned his disciples and us against this kind of thinking by saying, "when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

Gehazi's response is not one of gratitude, giving thanks for the little he has, but one of entitlement. It is not, "I owe God a debt which I can never repay," but "God owes me for all I have done in his name."

It is not unlike the meal grace offered by the farmer Charles Anderson early in the movie, Shenandoah, before war, and death, and loss of so much that is dear to him has touched him in his covetous, entitled soul, "Lord, we cleared this land. We plowed it, sowed it and harvested it. We cooked the harvest. It wouldn't be here, we wouldn't be eatin' it, if we hadn't done it all ourselves. We worked dog-boned hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you just the same anyway, Lord, for this food we're about to eat. Amen."

Before Naaman is out of sight, he chases down the little caravan, and says, "Sir, we've just had a couple of boys from seminary drop in, and they need a little help with tuition, books, room and board. Could you give us a couple of suits of clothes and maybe a talent of silver?"

"Oh sure, take two talents" (that's about \$40,000). To his servants, Naaman said, "Bundle up some fine clothes and send servants back with Gehazi." And when they arrive at Elisha's cottage, Gehazi says, "Just leave it there." Gehazi hides the clothes and silver. He goes in to Elisha and Elisha said, "Gehazi, where have you been?"

"I haven't been anywhere."

"My spirit was with you. I know where you've been; I know what you've been doing. Don't you understand? This kind of thing is not a financial matter. Look at your hands. **You are now the leper.**"

Now this is a complicated story, The complication consists of two elements. Gehazi is basically a good man. He's committed and loyal to his master; he's committed to the ministry. He is the servant of

the servant of God, a humble position, and almost no pay to be sure. But he wanted to serve. I'm sure his parents weren't pleased. "Why are you going to do that? You'll never have anything and what will you say when you go back for your class reunions?" There's no reason to question that he is a good man.

And then there's the money. Now when you bring up in church the subject of money, it is not appropriate suddenly to go into a tirade against the rich and become soft and sentimental and poetic about the poor. Not everyone who is rich is evil, and not everyone who is poor is virtuous but oppressed.

It's a very complicated subject. One of the most beautiful things we do in the house of God involves money. The ushers come with the baskets and receive the gifts, which are elevated in the presence of God. We stand and sing the doxology; there's a prayer of dedication and people we don't even know around the world are blessed. There's nothing more beautiful than this.

Yet the Bible argues with itself about money. Psalm 1:

"Whoever meditates on the law of the Lord day and night and loves the teaching of God is like a tree planted by a stream of water. Everything he does will prosper". In other words, You do what is right, you'll prosper. You do what is wrong, you will not prosper. And then Psalm 73: "When I saw the prosperity of the wicked, I was confused and envious" (paraphr.). Something is out of joint; it's not so simple.

Now we don't know what Gehazi was thinking when he came up with this fool idea to go for the money. It might have been no thinking at all. Here's this poor man and he sees all these beautiful horses and chariots and gold and silver and everything glistening in the sun. He didn't know how poor he was until he saw all that. Then it gets to him. It can happen.

It could be that Gehazi just said to himself, and quite reasonably so, "The service of God deserves more than I'm getting. If it's all this important, if it really is the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the glue that holds civilization together, then surely it's worth more than the pittance I get."

Gehazi may even have wanted to sock it to the rich or to the Syrians -- Naaman was both. Gehazi is willing to let his ethics be determined by the other person. There are some people you would never lie to. There others you would lie to without giving it a second thought. There are some people you would never cheat; there are others you would. That is, it is possible to let your ethics be determined by the nature of the other person. Now Gehazi knows that's wrong; his own Bible tells him it's wrong. "You shall love the stranger as yourself. Whenever the stranger comes within your gates, you treat that person with protection and care as though that person were a member of your family." He knows better.

We know better too. Jesus said, "You're not nice only to people who are nice to you. What is that? You're not generous only to people who are generous to you. Pagans do that. You're to be children of God who never react according to the other person, but according to God's own nature." So you are to be children of God and live out of your own character, not wait and see what the other person is like.

There are people who would never, never, never steal from a neighbor that they see every day, but would steal from an insurance company or the government.

Then there are those who calculate the seriousness of a breach of ethics by how much money was involved. Ten dollars? If you steal ten dollars, that's not as bad as a hundred. And a hundred is not as serious as a thousand and a thousand is not as serious as ten thousand, ten thousand is not as serious as a hundred thousand. How much was involved? Only a couple of bags of silver. No sweat. It's easy to think that way. I would like to suggest exactly the reverse. The smaller the amount involved, the greater revelation of the soul.

A couple of businessmen were in front of me going through the line at Bryce's cafeteria when I was in high school-- talking big deals, big business. One of them, when we came to those little pats of butter, you know, what are they, a nickel? He took a pat of butter, lifted his cup, slid it under the saucer, came to the cashier, didn't pay for it. Oh, what's the big deal? Five cents? I believe stealing a pat of butter was a greater revelation of the character of that man than embezzling a million dollars.

I don't know what Gehazi is thinking. Scripture doesn't say. He could just say that it's a cruel world. It's an uneven world; it's an unfair world. You have to take when you can take.

So one can understand, maybe, what led Gehazi to take the silver. But now what good will the silver do him? He is a leper. The magnificence of the promise has been lost in the poverty of its achievement. Worst of all, he has damaged all of his relationships. They're all tainted now. He lied to Naaman to get the money. He's lied to his beloved friend and boss, Elisha. What is he going to tell his wife when she asks, "Honey, where did you get all this money?" And when the kids come home from school, "Daddy, where did we get all this? And that suit you're wearing? Daddy?" What is he going to say?

Now, may I make two suggestions? One, in life the issue is not do you have money or do you not have money. Rather, the money you have, can you speak of it with celebration and love with your own family? Will you still have the respect of your children when they learn about you? The most awful, awful thing is for a child to lose respect for a mother or a father. Children will lie to defend their parents. Children will believe the best of us even when we're at our worst. May none of us ever commit an act or speak a word that causes a child to lie just to hold on to respect for us.

Suggestion number two: Can you say grace over your possessions? Can you bow your head and say a word of thanks. "Thank God for this." This is the final test, because gratitude is the central virtue of the Christian life. There is no other virtue like gratitude. I've never known a person who was grateful who was, at the same time, mean or small or bitter or hurtful. Not when you're grateful.

So now we get to the rest of the rest of the story. Skip forward three chapters to 2 Kings 8 and listen to this from verses 4&5:

"Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done."

And while he was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life."

Somehow at some point, Gehazi has been healed-- more than that, he has been made whole. The covetous, entitled Gehazi is gone, replaced by a truly thankful Gehazi who loves to serve and share with commoners and kings the miraculous and mighty works of the God he worships. But how is this possible? How could he have taken from him every truly important thing in his life, and find himself made grateful in the process?

Probably, in the same way *Shenandoah's* Charlie Anderson did. When war of Northern Aggression comes to him, he finds that no one can fail to be touched by it. He has lost his sons and daughters who now lay beside his beloved wife in the family plot. And Charlie Anderson must look upon the waste, the loss, the sorrow around him, and remember his earlier prayer of thanks, "It wouldn't be here, we wouldn't be hurtin' like this, if we hadn't done it all ourselves." Only then does Charlie Anderson come to realize the generosity of the God who had blessed his hard heart with so much goodness and love. And as they stand in church to sing the final hymn, Charlie's missing youngest boy, the child whose loss had set the whole tragic set events in motion, walks through the door of the church, and Charlie Anderson can finally sing of the goodness of God, "Praise God from whom ALL blessings flow."

When our kids were small, if an angel had come into the room and said, "Now you may receive one virtue, one quality for each child; what will it be?" I am sure my wife and I would discuss it, but I already know what my request would be. Make them always grateful.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Forbid it Lord, that our roots become so firmly attached to this earth, that we should fall in love with things. Save us from the tyranny of possessions which we have no leisure to enjoy, of property whose care becomes a burden. Help us, O God, to set our hearts only on the things which make life truly rich: Faith and Wisdom which will enable us to make a real contribution to your kingdom; Character which will make everyone able to trust us and to rely on us; Friends who will always be true to us.

Grant us the diligence which will never shirk honest labor or difficult tasks; The discipline which makes us refuse the easy way in order to train ourselves in goodness; The faithfulness which will never

allow us to fail you or any of your children.

Help us from now on: To use to the full every gift and talent you have given us to overcome every weakness which has us in its grip; To be forever true to you and to our church and to our friends and families, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Called as Partners in Christ's Service", #343 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION                      "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"                      *The Hymnal #343*

\*THE BLESSING

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE                      *(to the tune of Edelwiess)*                      "May the Lord"

May the Lord, Mighty God, bless and keep you forever.  
Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor.  
Lift up your eyes and see God's face full of grace forever.  
May the Lord, mighty God, bless and keep you forever.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis