

Flying Lessons with Gehazi

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Preacher: Ryan Orcutt

[0 : 00] Good morning. Before I ask Jeremy to read, I want to let you know how much I have enjoyed this sermon series.

My family has been enjoying this sermon series. We've been talking about how we enjoy the weekly cliffhangers that we often hear at the close of each sermon throughout the series.

Sometimes, you know, when we hear things like, if you want to find out what happens after this with Naaman, tune in next week. That type of thing.

We love that type of drama. And so, in like fashion, I thought it would be appropriate for me to recap what's been going on. Previously, in 2 Kings 5, Naaman, the leper, had gone to see Elisha.

Naaman was told to go wash himself in the Jordan River seven times. After he does, he is healed of his leprosy, and he proclaims that there is no God but the Lord.

[1 : 11] Naaman is overjoyed, and he tries to give Elisha gold, silver, and new clothes. But Elisha would have none of it. The newly healed Naaman departs, still in possession of the gifts that he had intended to give Elisha, which brings us to today's text.

So we're going to be reading 2 Kings 5. We're going to be reading the second portion of verse 19 down through 25. But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, See, my master has spared this Naaman, 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 Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down 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 Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets.

Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. And Naaman said, Please be pleased to accept two talents. And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothing and laid them on two of his servants.

[2 : 44] And they carried them before Gehazi. 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 Elisha said to him, Where have you been, Gehazi? And he said, Your servant went nowhere.

Let's pray. Father, we know that your word is a gift to us.

You tell us that it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Lord, we so appreciate that you have preserved your word for us all of these years so that we can look back and read what you have done among your people, how you have been faithful, even while your people are unfaithful.

We thank you for saving us from our sins through the work of Jesus. Lord, we pray that you would help illumine the word for us and help our hearts to accept your word, knowing that all of it is profitable for our correction, for training in righteousness.

[4 : 04] Help us, Lord. Guide us by your spirit this day. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. A number of you have been guests in our home.

A lot of you have, and I love that. If you have, perhaps you've noticed that my wife, Kara, has acquired a small collection of plants.

During your visit, maybe you've seen a snake plant, or a spider plant, or a mini monstera, or a fiddle leaf fig, or a dracaena.

I had to look up how to pronounce that one because I didn't know. A dracaena, or an aloe, or a jade plant, or a peace lily. You've perhaps seen all of these in our home. One plant you will not currently find in our house is the Venus flytrap.

Not yet, at least. But Kara's birthday is coming up. I'm just kidding. We're not going to buy one of those. But the Venus flytrap, if you're not as familiar, it is a fascinating plant.

[5 : 12] It has two wide leaves that have long spikes lined along the edge. It looks a little bit menacing. And when the Venus flytrap is open, when the two leaves are open, it releases like a shiny nectar just near all of those spikes.

And the shiny nectar is kind of a deceptive trick. It attracts flies and other insects. And when a fly lands and helps itself to the nectar, its body will brush up against these tiny hairs that are on the middle of the leaf.

And when the body brushes against one of the plant's hairs, the two leaves snap shut, trapping the fly inside, eventually killing it.

In today's text, we're going to be focused on Gehazi, who is Elisha's longtime servant. He himself engages in a little bit of trickery and deception.

And perhaps we can learn some things from him. That is my prayer this morning. Let's read verses 19 and 20. It says, But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian in not accepting from his hand what he brought.

[6 : 42] As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him. So Gehazi, who is the right-hand man to the prophet Elisha, is tempted by Naaman's riches.

And he thinks to himself, Elisha should have accepted these gifts. He was wrong to reject these gifts. He let Naaman off too easy, healing him with no payment.

Right? So Gehazi runs from his master and he runs toward the money. In my study of this text, it was interesting to come across what Gehazi means.

You know how many names have meanings. And the name Gehazi means valley of vision. Valley of vision. Or literally, low vision.

Vision toward the valley. In other words, Gehazi is well-named because his focus is not on high, heavenly things, but on low, earthly things.

[8 : 02] Gehazi is an Old Testament example of New Testament warnings for us. Think of Colossians 3. We are told, set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Or in the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Gehazi has just revealed where his heart is. He has a low focus and he fails to follow the godly example of Gehazi.

Now, to be fair, Gehazi does call Elisha his master, but he's not acting like it. When Naaman was healed of his leprosy, he offered gifts and Elisha said, as the Lord lives, I will receive none.

You see, in Elisha's eyes, Naaman's healing by the Lord is not an appropriate time to accept payment or gifts. Elisha understands the heart of God.

[9 : 27] It's a heavenly perspective. The Lord gives and we receive. Naaman's healing should remind us of Jesus cleansing us from our sins, also free of charge.

Hear the Lord's generous invitation in Isaiah 55. Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. He who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. I pray we never get used to that. The Lord offers us living water, new life in him at no cost.

That invitation is as much for you now as it was for Naaman in his day because Naaman has experienced new life through his washing in the Jordan River. And Elisha resolves that Naaman will receive this at no cost.

Remember, back in verse 16, when Naaman offers Elisha the gifts, Elisha says, as the Lord lives, I will receive none.

[10 : 46] No payment for God's grace. What a great example for Gehazi. And yet in verse 20, Gehazi says to himself, as the Lord lives, I will receive that gift.

In Gehazi's mind, Elisha was being too kind to the Syrian commander because Naaman had terrorized the people of Israel.

Going on raids, doing things like carrying off a girl to be a servant in his own house. So Gehazi justifies his greed by saying that Naaman should have to pay.

It feels unfair that Naaman has received healing and new life after his life of sin toward God and his people. And Gehazi has a point there.

It is unfair. On the surface, it seems unfair to receive new life free of charge after sinning against God.

[11 : 52] But I'm reminded of the words of Reliant K. The beauty of grace is that it makes life not fair. Gehazi, however, is not focused on grace, which would be a heavenly perspective.

He is focused on greed. So he's torn between his two masters here. He runs away from one master, Elisha, and he runs toward his new master, Money.

Let's read verses 21 and 22. So Gehazi followed Naaman, and when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?

And he said, All is well. Now catch this. My master has sent me to say, There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets.

Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. Do you see what just happened here? Do you see what Gehazi was willing to do to satisfy his greed?

[13 : 04] He lies. He invents two visitors, makes them up out of thin air. Two visitors. And not only that, but he has thrown Elisha under the bus as part of this lie.

Elisha sent me to receive gifts from you. That didn't happen. But that's, that's the beginning of Gehazi's lie.

Elisha sent me to receive from you. But let's stop and think. Elisha had just told Naaman, as the Lord lives, I will receive none.

So because of Gehazi's lie, Naaman now thinks that Elisha has gone back on his word. What a tragic example in the eyes of a brand new child of God.

That convicts me deeply. How often have I been a poor example to those newly in the kingdom or not yet in the kingdom?

[14 : 22] Do we care about that? The example that we set to those newly in the kingdom and those not yet in the kingdom. Because in this one act, in this one lie, Gehazi has broken at least, I'm being conservative here, at least three of the Ten Commandments.

He dismantles God's law from the bottom up. I say from the bottom up because I'm going to start with commandment number 10 and work my way up. Tenth commandment, you shall not covet. But that's what Gehazi is doing. He is wanting something that does not belong to him. He wants Naaman's silver. And the ninth commandment, you shall not bear false witness.

Oh boy, Gehazi has lied. Which reveals to us today and his lie reveals to himself that his desire is inappropriate because he has to lie to get it.

And the eighth commandment, you shall not steal. But when it comes down to it, that's exactly what's happening here. And how does this snowball so quickly?

[15 : 39] His one little selfish desire has now snowballed so quickly. How does that happen? Well, hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 6. Hear this closely.

No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

And then Jesus clarifies what he means. He says, you cannot serve God and money. Gehazi has now begun to bend his knee to the treasure.

and his actions are showing that he despises the commands of the heavenly Lord and the example of his master Elisha.

But Naaman, on the other hand, has had exactly the opposite experience. When God graciously changed Naaman's body and heart, his loyalty changed.

[16 : 46] He has a heart now that's full of gratitude to the Lord. Naaman must be thinking, how valuable are these possessions to me when compared with the fact that I just had an encounter with the one true God.

My possessions do not matter. He's all too willing to give the gifts to Gehazi. Verse 23, Naaman said, be pleased to accept two talents.

And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver and two bags with two changes of clothing and laid them on two of his servants and they carried them before Gehazi.

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. But Gehazi is not in the clear quite yet.

Verse 25, Gehazi is now in over his head.

[17 : 58] He has to lie over and over and over again, all in service to his greed. With all of this deception and with all of his trickery, it almost seems like Gehazi is resembling a Venus fly trap.

But that's not it. Gehazi is not the Venus fly trap. Gehazi is the fly. Gehazi is the fly.

Because, like a fly being drawn to the shiny nectar on the leaves of a Venus fly trap, Gehazi is drawn to the splendor of riches. And in satisfying his own appetite, he becomes ensnared to his own sin.

He thought he was deceiving everyone in order to take control of the money, but in reality, the money has now taken control of Gehazi. Side note, flies do not receive warnings from their parents, mom and dad McFly, to avoid traps like this.

They just fly around, they see nectar, they go for it, they eat it, not knowing that this particular nectar is a trap that will lead to the fly's death.

[19 : 28] But the same cannot be said for us. our father is gracious to us and he has warned us of the dangers of pursuing wealth.

Please read with me 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 9 through 11. Listen to what Paul says to Timothy. Verse 9, but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

But listen to Paul, but as for you, O man of God, flee, these things. Flee these things and instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

you see, Gehazi's actions are a direct reverse of this command. In his love of money, he flees righteousness, godliness, faith, and love, the very things he ought to pursue.

[21 : 01] This is the deceitfulness of wealth. So the children of God must not fall prey to these earthly desires. like the love of money.

But what is so troubling is that the church receives mixed messages in this area. God's word is clear.

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Jesus says you can't serve both God and money. If you try, you're going to end up hating one of the two. So why do I say that there's a mixed message to the church?

Well, if you browse the Christian section of any bookstore, you will be swarmed with messages that the love of money in no way conflicts with being a Christian.

Here are a few titles that I found with surprisingly low effort. None of this, no two are from the same author, and they're all in the Christian section of the bookstore.

[22 : 22] Here's one. Biblical Wealth and Prosperity, A Christian Guide to Manifesting Money. Poverty, Riches, and Wealth, Moving from a Life of Lack into True Kingdom Abundance.

Here's another one. Unlocking Wealth from the Courts of Heaven, Securing Biblical Prosperity for Kingdom Advancement and Generational Blessing. Another one.

Financial Success, God's Way. Millionaire Secrets to Overflowing Wealth. Here's another one. God wants you to be rich.

How and why everyone can enjoy material and spiritual wealth in our abundant world. Just one more. Simple title, You Need More Money.

That was from an author. He wrote that while he was the lead pastor of Hillsong in Australia. You need more money. But let's read 1 Timothy 6, just verses 10 and 11 one more time.

[23 : 36] The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. That is what we are to pursue.

Now, you might say to yourself, well, I don't compromise my walk with God in order to pursue money. It's not a problem for me. Maybe that's what you're thinking. If that's true, that's great.

If that's true, that's great. But listen closely. Search your hearts.

What do you pursue that robs you of your closeness with Jesus? What is it that acts like a Venus fly trap to you?

[24 : 44] What is it that you seek out and consume only to realize that it is consuming you? As children of God, we cannot imagine that we are immune to these temptations.

Just look at Gehazi. I mean, even if we are consistently close to other believers, if we spend a lot of time with other believers, that does not make us immune to these temptations. Think through this. Elijah, that was Elisha's master one generation back. Elijah was a faithful prophet. He loved what God loved and he hated what God hated. And Elisha, his servant, didn't just spend time with his master, but he learned wisdom from his master and he committed to being like him, to imitating him. Elisha followed Elijah as Elijah followed God. And we would expect that Elisha, after following Elijah closely, would become like his master.

And he did. Elisha became a faithful prophet. He loved what God loved and hated what God hated. And Gehazi, his servant, spent time with him.

[26 : 09] He followed him closely, but he didn't become like his master. When it came to money, Gehazi hated his master's generosity.

He served a new master, choosing to lay up for himself treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, rather than laying up for himself treasures in heaven.

But because of that time spent, we would expect that Gehazi, after following Elisha so closely, would become like his master. But he didn't.

It wasn't enough to be near Elisha. It wasn't enough to just be near him. It required being changed by the example of his master and not letting greed or pride or any other sinful desire replace him as master.

Gehazi was with Elisha day after day, year after year, and even being in service to him outwardly, but it didn't cause any change.

[27 : 22] Is that the same as someone who comes to church week after week, year after year, spending time with other believers, and yet not truly submitting to Jesus as master and lord?

So what about you? Are you born again? Have you received God's grace and forgiveness of sins? Is Jesus your master?

Is he your lord? Shouldn't we expect that as a Christian, after following Jesus closely, we would become more and more like our master? And it doesn't happen by merely being at church or being around other believers.

It requires spending time with Jesus, following him as lord, and committing to avoid any sinful desire that would replace him. I'm going to say a sentence that is very familiar to a lot of us, but I want us to stop and think about it.

Jesus suffered and died for us. He purchased us.

[28 : 43] That's why in Hebrews 12 it says to lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

So let's learn from Gehazi's mistake. Don't set your sights on earthly things that will pass away.

Look to Jesus, the one who loves your soul, the one who leads us in the way everlasting.

When we have him, we have everything that we need. That's why we sang this morning in that last song, your word is food for famished ones, freedom for the slave, riches for the needy soul.

When he is our desire, he is all that we need. Tune in next week for more wisdom from God's word.

And before we participate in communion, I invite us to take a few minutes in silence. Speak one-on-one with Jesus. Confess any sin that has kept you from imitating him.

[30 : 05] And know this, listen close, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let's pray. Lord, you do know our hearts.

You know us better than we know ourselves. Lord, would you please stir up in us a desire to love what is good, to hate what is evil, to hold loosely to the things of this world, not to pursue the things that will pass away, but to pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, and love.

Lord, we know that when we are tempted by our own evil desires, we flee from those things. Lord, help us to pursue those wonderful things that you have for us.

Lord, continue to convict us of our sin, the things that hold us back from following you. Lord, would you please reignite a passion for imitating our Savior Jesus, the one who suffered and died, to take away our sin so that we can stand before you with confidence as your redeemed children, free from the judgment of sin, having no condemnation ahead of us because we have been purchased.

[32 : 17] Lord, help us to hold that truth closely in our hearts. Keep that truth before our eyes so that we can live a life worthy of the calling that you have called us to live.

Please go before us, Lord. We need you every hour, every day. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.
And it's in his name that we pray. Amen.