

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 15th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

A Light Shines into the Darkness
Fourth Sunday of Lent
2 Kings 5:1-14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

In this season of waiting and watching,
we come not with easy answers, but with honest hearts.

We come as we are—carrying light and shadow, faith and uncertainty.

God does not turn away from what is hidden or unfinished.

God meets us in truth, not performance.

We bring what is unresolved, trusting it is safe in God's presence.

Here, we are invited to slow down,
to listen for the quiet voice that speaks life.

We open ourselves to a light that does not rush or demand.

This is a time for humility, for surrender, for attentive obedience.

Teach us to receive what we cannot control and to trust what we cannot yet see.

The light of God is already among us—
steady, patient, and full of mercy.

We turn toward that light and worship the One who meets us here.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy and faithful God,
we gather in Your presence not because we are ready or complete,
but because You are gracious and true.

You are the One who was before all things
and remains when all else fades.

You are not hurried, not distant, not deterred by what we carry.

Your mercy is steady.

Your light is patient.
Your love is deeper than our understanding.
We adore You—not for what You give,
but for who You are:
the God who listens,
the God who meets us where we are,
the God whose faithfulness does not depend on our certainty or strength.
As we come to worship,
quiet our striving and still our defenses.
Draw us out of distraction and into attentiveness.
Help us to release the need to impress, explain, or control,
and teach us instead how to receive.
Send Your Spirit among us now.
Open our hearts to truth that heals.
Open our ears to wisdom we might otherwise overlook.
Open our lives to transformation that begins in humility.
May this time of worship shape us—
not through spectacle,
but through presence;
not through urgency,
but through trust.
We offer ourselves to You,
and we worship You with reverence and hope,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Call to Confession

In this season of reflection, we are invited to come before God with honesty.
Not to defend ourselves.
Not to explain ourselves.
But to tell the truth.
God knows us more deeply than we know ourselves
and meets us not with condemnation, but with grace.
Let us confess our sin and our need before God,
confident that we are heard.

Prayer of Confession

Gracious and merciful God,
we confess that we often resist Your work within us.
We prefer what is familiar to what is faithful.
We cling to control when You invite trust.

We seek solutions that preserve our pride
 rather than surrender that opens us to healing.
 We confess that we have ignored quiet wisdom,
 dismissed inconvenient truth,
 and avoided obedience when it felt too small, too slow, or too costly.
 We have relied on our own strength
 and spoken of faith without fully living it.
 We have turned to anxiety instead of prayer
 and chosen appearances over honesty.
 Forgive us, O God.
 Not because we deserve it,
 but because You are gracious.
 Create in us clean hearts.
 Teach us humility.
 Restore in us a willingness to listen, to trust, and to follow
 wherever Your grace may lead.
 We place ourselves before You now—
 not hiding, not excusing, not pretending—
 but open to the work of Your mercy.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:
 God is rich in mercy and steadfast in love.
 What is confessed is not rejected.
 What is brought into the light is not abandoned.
 God's grace is not withheld from those who turn toward Him.
 In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
 We are restored.
 We are made new.

The Lord's Prayer

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 the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn #209: "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go"

O love that will not let me go,
 I rest my weary soul in thee;
 I give thee back the life I owe,
 That in thine ocean depths its flow
 May richer, fuller be.

O Light that follows all my way,
 I yield my flickering torch to thee;
 My heart restores its borrowed ray,
 That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
 May brighter, fairer be.

O cross that liftest up my head,
 I dare not ask to fly from thee;
 I lay in dust life's glory dead,
 And from the ground there blossoms red
 Life that shall endless be.

Responsive Reading**Isaiah 55:6-11**

⁶ "Seek the Lord while he may be found;
 call upon him while he is near;
⁷ **let the wicked forsake his way,
 and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

⁹ **For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
 and do not return there but water the earth,
 making it bring forth and sprout,
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

¹¹ **so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
 it shall not return to me empty,**

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Anthem (Music Ministry): "I Choose You"

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

2 Kings 5:1-14

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. ² Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵ And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel."

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷ And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Sermon

The season of Lent is not about simply giving up habits and food that are not good for us. It is not about the quick fix of praying a little more each day or giving up of the simple sinful things we have in our life.

It is not even the time of year when the Church, or we as Christians, attempt to apply a quick fix to whatever troubles our faith or whatever we believe separates us from God for 40 days.

Instead, Lent is meant to be a season in which we slow down. It calls us into a deliberately examination of ourselves—a patient peeling away of the lies we tell in order to excuse our sins—and an intentional decision to remain within the truth of God’s Word long enough for the Holy Spirit to begin His saving work in us.

Scripture itself calls us to this kind of honest self-examination:

Lamentations 3:40

⁴⁰Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord!

What Lent asks of us is deeply countercultural.

It asks us to stop running, to stop avoiding the truths that are contained in God’s Word simply so that we can continue living the lives we prefer. Lent asks us to slow our pace so that the deeper realities of our lives can finally be seen in the light of God’s presence.

We live in a world that constantly teaches us how to excuse our sins and justify our mistakes. It is a world where appearances matter more than reality, where we are trained from an early age to present a carefully managed version of ourselves.

We learn how to look composed, how to sound confident, how to project strength long before we ever learn how to be honest. We master the art of presentation long before we understand the discipline of repentance.

Yet the Word of God exposes the deeper truth about us:

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Lent interrupts that training. It confronts it directly and tells us that honesty with God and with ourselves must come first.

Lent invites each of us to step into the Holy light of God's Word. It teaches us that true healing does not come through the denial of our waywardness, but through the acceptance of it and obedience to the truth that God reveals.

The apostle John writes with striking clarity:

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Our wholeness is not found by pretending that everything in this world is fine. Instead, it begins when we allow what we try so hard to hide, from ourselves and from the world, to be named for what it truly is - Sin - first before God, and then, when the time is right, before one another. It is only in that God's light that true restoration begin.

The wisdom literature reminds us:

Proverbs 28:13

¹³ Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

And that is precisely the kind of truth we encounter in the story before us today in Second Kings. Our passage introduces us to a remarkable man named Naaman. He is described as the commander of the army of the king of Syria, a great man in the sight of his master, and highly regarded.

Scripture introduces him this way:

2 Kings 5:1

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

Through him the Lord had given victory to Syria. That detail alone is striking. The victories of this foreign commander are attributed not to chance or military brilliance, but to the sovereign work of God Himself. Even beyond the borders of Israel, even within the armies of a rival nation, the Lord is at work directing the events of history.

By every measure the world recognizes, Naaman is glorious. He is powerful, respected, and indispensable. He is everything a man might hope to be in the eyes of the world.

And yet the Scripture quietly adds a single word that changes everything: “but.” “But he was a leper.”

The brilliance of his life cannot conceal the truth beneath it. Leprosy in the ancient world was not simply a medical condition. It was a visible sign of corruption, something slowly consuming the body from within. It was a disease that reminded everyone who saw it that human strength and human reputation cannot ultimately preserve us.

In many ways it becomes a living picture of the deeper spiritual corruption that Scripture says marks every human life:

Romans 3:23

²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

The text refuses to let Naaman’s greatness distract us from his deeper condition. Beneath the polished surface of his life there is decay. Beneath the public honour lies a private vulnerability that threatens to undo everything he has built.

In that sense, Naaman stands before us as more than just a historical figure. He stands before us as a mirror of the human condition itself. Outwardly successful, outwardly composed, outwardly admired and yet inwardly marked by a corruption we cannot heal.

Scripture repeatedly reminds us that sin is not merely something we occasionally do, it is something that has worked its way into the deepest parts of who we are and what we do.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that:

Ecclesiastes 7:20

²⁰ **Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.**

Beneath all our accomplishments, beneath our reputation, beneath the identities we carefully construct, there remains a truth, our sinful desires, that threatens to undo everything.

Like Naaman, we may be known for our great accomplishments and respectable lives, yet the deeper question remains whether we have faced the deeper reality of our sinful nature before God. True healing never begins with denial. It begins with truth. It begins when the illusion

breaks and we recognize that beneath all our worldly strength there remains a need that only God can address.

After introducing Naaman, the story suddenly shifts, not to a king or prophet, but to a young girl. She is a child taken captive from Israel during a raid. She has been torn from her family, stripped of her status, and forced into servitude within the household of the very man whose army carried her away.

Her entire life has been overturned by forces beyond her control. She lives surrounded by loss and powerlessness, in a land she did not choose and among people who hold authority over her life.

And yet it is from that darkness that she speaks. Her words are simple and almost easy to overlook: "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." That is all she says. There is no dramatic speech, no prophetic vision, no display of power, just a quiet expression of faith. Yet those few words become the first ray of light entering into the darkness of Naaman's life.

The Lord who rules over history often chooses the most unlikely instruments to accomplish His purposes. Not kings, not warriors, but a captive servant girl. God's grace often moves forward through quiet faithfulness rather than visible power. The movement of redemption frequently begins in places the world considers insignificant.

Imagine sitting late at night in a hospital waiting room, unsure of what comes next. The hum of fluorescent lights fills the silence, and the clock on the wall ticks far too loudly. Your phone rests face down in your hand because there are no more updates to check. No speeches. No solutions. Then suddenly someone beside you quietly says, "Let's pray."

That is often how light enters. Small, unforced, faithful. In moments like that we discover that God's grace often arrives through voices that the world barely notices.

Naaman hears the girl's words and eventually makes his way to Israel carrying wealth and authority. He brings silver, gold, and letters from kings because he assumes healing will operate through the same structures of worldly power that he understands.

He approaches the situation as a negotiation rather than a plea for mercy. Yet when the king of Israel receives the letter, he panics. He tears his robes and cries out, "Am I God, to kill and make alive?"

His words acknowledge God's authority, yet he cannot see that God's work is unfolding right in front of him. Fear has replaced trust. Even those who should recognize the activity of God sometimes struggle to see it when it arrives on their doorstep in unexpected ways.

This is when the prophet Elisha finally steps into the story. But even here the moment unfolds in a way Naaman never expected. Elisha does not come out to greet him personally. There is no ceremony and no dramatic ritual. Instead, a messenger delivers a simple instruction: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored."

Naaman is outraged. He had imagined a ceremony, a spectacle. He had expected the prophet to appear in grandeur, to call upon the name of the Lord with sweeping gestures. Instead, he receives an instruction that feels humiliating. The river itself, the Jordan, is muddy and unimpressive. It does not look like salvation. It does not match Naaman's expectations of how divine power should appear.

Yet this moment reveals one of the deepest truths of the story. God's grace does not adjust itself to our pride.

It calls us to surrender. The ways of God often seem ordinary or unimpressive to those who expect spiritual transformation to arrive with dramatic displays of power. But again and again the Scriptures remind us that God delights in working through what appears weak, humble, and ordinary.

Ironically, Naaman's anger nearly causes him to walk away from the very healing he desperately needs.

Once again unexpected voices intervene. His servants approach him carefully and say, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

It is that quiet wisdom that breaks through his pride. Sometimes the greatest obstacle to grace is not our doubt but our pride, the belief that our salvation must somehow correspond to our sense of our own importance. Yet the path that God offers is often simpler and humbler than we expect.

So Naaman goes down to the Jordan.

The fact that he goes down to the river matters.

He removes his armor and steps into the muddy water. Seven times he lowers himself beneath the surface. Seven times he submits himself to a prophetic word he did not fully understand.

Each descent is an act of surrender, a quiet acknowledgment that healing will not come through his own strength. And when he emerges, the Scripture tells us his flesh is restored like the flesh of a little child, and he is clean.

The great commander becomes childlike again. This powerful man becomes a receiver rather than a conqueror. This is the miracle that humility makes possible. What power and wealth could never achieve is accomplished through simple obedience to the Word of God.

Yet the story does not end with Naaman alone. Centuries later this very story is remembered and interpreted by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus reminds His listeners that in the days of the prophet Elisha there were many lepers in Israel, yet none of them were cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.

In saying this, Jesus reveals something profound about the nature of God's grace. Even in this ancient story, God was already revealing that how His mercy would reach far beyond the borders of Israel. The grace of God was never meant to remain confined within a single nation or people. From the very beginning, the Lord was preparing the world for the day when His cleansing would come not through a river but through a Savior.

So yes, Naaman entered the Jordan and was cleansed outwardly, but the coming of Christ would bring something far greater.

Christ does not merely cleanse skin; He cleanses hearts. He takes upon Himself the uncleanness of the world. He enters the deepest darkness of human sin and death, not reluctantly but willingly.

As the prophet Isaiah foretold:

Isaiah 53:4-5

**⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.**

**⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.**

It is at the cross, the One who had no corruption takes upon Himself the corruption that belongs to us, so that those who humble themselves and trust in Him might be made clean. The healing

of Naaman becomes a signpost pointing forward to the greater cleansing that God would accomplish in this world through Jesus Christ.

We are still walking through Lent and we have not yet reached Easter.

Lent does not ask us to fix ourselves; it asks us to face the truth. It asks us to stop fleeing the places where God is already waiting.

Like Naaman, we are often tempted to preserve our pride, to seek healing in ways that allow us to remain in control of our lives. Yet the grace of God invites us into a different posture. It invites us to step into the humility that makes transformation possible.

Naaman's story reminds us that the light of God often appears where we least expect it.

It shines through His servants.

It speaks through simple words.

It flows through muddy rivers.

And it meets us not when we are impressive, but when we are willing. The light is already shining. It is patient, it is steady, and it is strong enough to heal us—not by denying the darkness, but by meeting us within it. The only question that remains is the same one Naaman faced long ago: are we willing to go down into the water and be washed clean as we live our lives as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,
Merciful God,
You do not rush us, and You do not fear what You find in us.
Give us the courage to stop running,
the honesty to name what is broken,
and the humility to obey even when the way looks ordinary.
Meet us in the waters we would rather avoid,
and heal us not by denying the darkness,
but by shining Your patient light within it.
Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #242: “What Wondrous Love is This”

What wondrous love is this,
 O my soul, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
 What wondrous love is this
 that caused the Lord of bliss
 To lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
 To lay aside his crown for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb,
 I will sing, I will sing;
 To God and to the Lamb I will sing.
 To God and to the Lamb
 Who is the great Ω I Am Ω ;
 While millions join the theme,
 I will sing, I will sing;
 While millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I'm free,
 I'll sing on, I'll sing on;
 And when from death I'm free, I sing on.
 And when from death I'm free.
 I'll sing and joyful be,
 And through eternity
 I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
 And through eternity I'll sing on.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious and faithful God,
 we come before You with gratitude for Your nearness.
 You have met us in worship not with pressure or demand,
 but with patience, mercy, and truth.
 We thank You for the gift of this gathered community—
 for voices raised together,
 for silence shared reverently,
 for hearts drawn again toward You.
 In a world that often urges us to hurry,
 You invite us to dwell, to listen, and to trust.
 We lift before You the needs of Your people.
 Hold close those who are weary in body or spirit.

Be near to those carrying grief, uncertainty, or quiet fear.
 Grant wisdom to those facing difficult decisions
 and comfort to those whose burdens feel unseen.
 Strengthen all who serve—
 in homes, in workplaces, in caregiving roles,
 and in every act of love that goes unnoticed by the world
 but is known fully by You.
 Teach us to live with humility and attentiveness.
 Help us to release what hardens us
 and to receive what restores us.
 Shape us into people who listen well,
 who trust deeply,
 and who reflect Your grace in ordinary faithfulness.
 And now, O God,
 as we prepare to move from this time of worship
 into a time of shared table and conversation,
 we thank You for the food that has been prepared
 and for the hands that have provided it.
 Bless this meal that we are about to partake in and our fellowship.
 May it nourish our bodies
 and strengthen the bonds between us.
 Let this table be a place of welcome,
 of laughter and care,
 of renewed connection and gentle joy.
 As we eat and as we go,
 send us out sustained by Your mercy,
 guided by Your wisdom,
 and held always in Your love.
 We offer this prayer with gratitude and trust,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Benediction

Go now in the grace of God—
 not hurried, not hardened, not afraid.
 May the God who is faithful and near
 grant you patience where answers are slow,
 humility where trust is required,
 and courage to walk in quiet obedience.

May the light of Christ guide you
not only in moments of clarity,
but also in uncertainty and waiting.
And may the Spirit sustain you—
forming you through ordinary faithfulness
into people of mercy, truth, and peace.
Go in the love of God,
held, forgiven, and renewed.
Amen.