

“What’s Wrong with Mine?”

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Texts: Psalm 30 and 2 Kings 5: 1-15

There is a lot happening in 2 Kings, let alone in Chapter 5. Today, I’m not going to spend a lot of time on an academic review of all of that action. In this case, the Bible Study group is a wonderful place to dig deeper into all of the meanings and historical context behind a given scripture. Instead, I want to explore the question that Naaman asks after Elisha gives him a prescription to be healed from his leprosy. The prescription is to “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored and become clean” (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman then asks, “Aren’t the rivers in Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all Israel’s waters? Couldn’t I wash in them and get clean?” So, he turned away and proceeded to leave in anger (2 Kings 5:12).” In essence, he asks, “aren’t my rivers better than yours?” Another way to say it is, “What’s wrong with mine?”

On the surface, it seems like a ridiculous question. Who would spend time comparing their nations’ rivers? Who would get any satisfaction concerning whether or not your rivers are as good as, or even better than, mine? And then to get angry about it!

And yet, we all know that we spend a lot of our time comparing ourselves to others. We compare our looks, our money, our homes, our families, our vehicles, our nation, our church, our pastor, our auto mechanic, our musicians, our...and the list goes on. We would like to think that we are beyond that, but the truth is, we spend a lot of time wondering and often exclaiming, “mine’s better!”

When we're done comparing our things, then we compare our methods. It's one of my favorite issues in most churches I've served or been a part of. The argument begins with someone bemoaning the fact that no one helps with anything anymore. Or, why don't we have the (fill in the blank) anymore? Then we begin to speak ill of young people because they just aren't as dedicated to the church as we are. In every generation, there is a group who spends a lot of time comparing their youth to the youth of today, and always the youth of today come up short. Then we complain because there are so few of them involved.

Then one of those youth (or a small group) try to help. Funny thing is, they do the same thing differently. Even if the end result is identical, there seems to always be someone around to tell them they are doing it wrong. That becomes even more pronounced if the end result is different. I have multiple church stories about these things from my own experience, but this type of criticism does not only take place in church. It takes place everywhere. Perhaps you've heard that some believe there has been too much change to Alpenfest, for example.

Naaman's question is a question you have asked some time in your life. You've wondered if your (fill in the blank) is good enough. Sometimes you answer your own question and decide, "no." You decide that whatever you have to offer, whatever you have to share, is not good enough. Some people go as far as to decide that THEY are not good enough. Not only are their things, their ideas, their hopes, or whatever not good enough, they themselves are somehow faulty. Where do we get the idea that we are not good enough? Is it about our things? Do we measure ourselves based on our looks, our money,

our house, our whatever...? Do we see inherent worth in who we are? Do we see that what we have is good enough?

While it can be sinful to think of ourselves better than someone else, it can also be sinful to think less of ourselves than someone else. Our constant comparison is a dead end. God doesn't like it. This is not because God is some angry God waiting for you to screw up. Quite the opposite! God made you, pronounced you good, and sees God's own image in you! God's answer to whether or not you are good enough is always YES!

I know we have to do some comparing. We need to decide if an apple is good or rotten. We have to decide if someone is the right person to be in a relationship with. We have to decide whether that color is the right color for our wall. At the same time, we can spend too much time in comparison. We can get too caught up in being good enough. Good enough for what? Good enough or whom? And...on what basis.

Like I said to you at the beginning, there was a lot more going on when Naaman first asked his question about the rivers. But it did raise for me—and I hope it does for you—how do we decide who or what is good enough? How do we decide if something is right for our church? Is all change bad? Is all change good? How do we know when it's a good change or a bad change? How do we decide whether we do what we've always done, or whether it's time to change? How do we let new people in, while at the same time maintaining necessary traditions? How do we know which traditions are necessary?

Let's just say it's not as easy as it looks. But it is well worth our effort to engage the questions. This is true of both our personal choices, and the ones we make here together.

Amen.