**GOD’S MESSENGERS 2: 2 KINGS 4:1-37, 5:1-15, 6:8-23, MAY 7/23.**

 Last week we looked at the prophet Elijah and how God used him to tackle the ongoing problem of idol worship among God’s Chosen People. Elijah’s comment in front of the 450 prophets of Baal cut right to the heart of the matter: “How long will you waver between 2 opinions? If the Lord is God follow Him; but if Baal is god, follow him.” We noted that if we’re putting anything in a higher place in our lives than God, then that is what we are worshiping. Since God has given everything for us, costing Him the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, we need to be sure that we don’t fritter away God’s gift of grace!

 Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to get Baal to burn a sacrifice they offered to him. Of course, that was to no avail. But when Elijah prayed to God, he prayed with the desire that God would be revealed as the 1 true & living God, that He would be honoured so people would turn back to Him. It’s not about us; it’s about God. God delights in answering prayer that’s honest & honours Him. God answered Elijah’s prayer with a great demonstration of power.

 Almost instantly Elijah became fearful & ran from Jezebel, because she swore to kill him. He sat under a tree in the desert, exhausted from fleeing. He prayed that he might die, “I am no better than my ancestors.” Have you ever felt like that? There’s just no more fight left in you, no hope in front of you, no apparent purpose in your life. Everything you touch turns bad & it’s just too difficult to go on. But God provided Elijah with hot cakes & water & nourished him. God knows your condition, your frame, your limit. He cares about you & your wellbeing.

 God met Elijah on Mount Horeb. “What are you doing here, Elijah? Did you ever question if God knows you by name or knows who you are? Put those doubts aside. Elijah thought he was the only 1 remaining faithful to God. The enemy was now trying to kill him too. It sounds like our day & time. More Christians have been killed in the 20th century for their faith than all previous centuries combined. It was a desperate time for Elijah as it is for Christians today too.

**So what did Elijah do?** **Nothing. God came to him**, not in a roaring wind or earthquake or even a fire, but in a gentle whisper. **You don’t have to chase God; He’ll find you.** He’s never lost sight of you. **Have you heard His quiet, still voice?** He wants your attentive ear.

 **Elijah mentored Elisha**. Pass along what God’s gifted you with to another person; other-wise the Church is only 1 generation away from extinction. One of the greatest things we can do is mentor someone along in their spiritual growth. Elijah asked Elisha as important a question as we can ask another: **“Tell me what I can do for you.”** **Jesus was all about mentoring**. He mentored His disciples so that they could bring the good news of the Gospel to the whole world. Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. **It wasn’t Elijah’s to give. It was God’s**. The request was to be as good as or better than Elijah. That’s what we want for our children but it’s also what we should want for our Church, and each 1 in it, so we’ll get better & grow deeper in faith: “Here are some things I’ve learned; this will help you”—nurturing 1 person at a time.

 **So what did Elisha do with this double portion of spirit?** Lots! Elisha is a remarkable & powerful prophet. A town had **a polluted spring**, the water from which was killing people. Eli-sha asked for a new bowl, put salt in it, then threw it into the spring. The entire town’s water supply was purified from that time on. **Jesus reminds us that we are to be salt & light in the world**. Like Elisha with the spring, **we are to purify the world**, 1 person at a time, by our actions & words. **Are you adding salty flavour to your world**?

 The wife of a prophet cried out to Elisha that her husband had died and that creditors were now coming to take her 2 boys away as slaves. Elisha, in the true spirit that Elijah had taught him, asked, **“How can I help you?”** Have you asked that question of another person this week? “Tell me what do you have in your house?” She answered, “Your servant has nothing there at all except a little oil.” Elisha told her to ask all her neighbours for all their empty jars, then go inside with her sons, shut the door behind her & pour the little oil that she had into the jars. She did that & the oil continued to flow until the last jar was full. Elisha told her to sell the oil, pay off her debts. She could live on what was left.

 What can we take from this? God’s grace abounds! God is a God of abundance, not scar-city. **He wants to fill your cup to overflowing**. “My cup overflows. Surely goodness & mercy will follow me all the days of my life & I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!” **Are you liv-ing like your cup is overflowing?** **Are you living the generous life that spills over to those ar-ound you? Is your joy spilling over?** Philip. closes with: “My God will meet all your needs accor-ding to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Peter says: cast all our anxieties on Him because he cares for you. **Are you trusting God to graciously, abundantly, faithfully meet all your needs?**

**God met those needs from the resources the woman already had**, slim though they were. **Whatever you have, God can use it & multiply it within you & for you**. It’s a message to **use what gifts God has given you. In His hands those gifts are not limited**; they can accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God! The message here is to use them. How many blessings aren’t happening because we aren’t exercising the gifts God has given us?

The 2nd part of the 1st reading is about **the Shunammite’s kindness** to Elisha, offering

him a place to stay whenever he came through their town. Have you shown kindness & hospitality to others this week? **Elisha wondered—again**—what could he do to help her. Are you catching **that recurring theme—“What can I do for you?”** Though she had not asked for anything of the kind, he told her she would have a son. She didn’t believe him, but that’s what happened. Joy of joys! But soon, horror of horrors followed. As a young boy, he became very sick & died in her arms. A gift she hadn’t asked for had suddenly turned very bad. **Has that ever happened to you?** Her immediate response was to go to the man of God, Elisha. When bad things happen to you is your 1st response to go to God & his servants, or to keep your distance & try to work things out on your own? **God wants to help you & walk with you**.

**Elisha was compassionate** with her. He cared about her & went to the boy. And **he prayed**. Is that a 1st response for you? I remember once when 1 of our daughters nearly cut the end of her baby finger off & I took her to the hospital. A friend of ours from the church happened to be there. Seeing our distress, she simply asked if we’d prayed yet & proceeded to do so. Our story & this story had good endings. **The boy was resurrected to life**. This is a very rare event in the OT, but it happened here & it’s a sign that God is the giver of all life & for all time. **It’s a foretelling that Jesus will be resurrected from the dead & overcome sin, death, Satan & hell once & for all time. His resurrection though, is different. As God, this power over death was & is within Him. And His resurrection prepared the way for us all, at least all who believe in Him with all our being, to also be resurrected to new life for eternity! Hallelujah!**

God used Elisha in another Christ-like example, **multiplying 20 loaves** of bread to feed 100 people. **God is a God of abundance**. Again He uses the resources we have & multiplies

 them. **God is not limited by resources or circumstances**.

An army commander of Aram, Nathan, had leprosy. Aram was an enemy of Israel. Yet a captured slave girl encouraged him to go to Elisha, who could take his leprosy from him. When Nathan went, Elisha didn’t come out of his house, but sent a servant to tell him to go & wash 7 times in the Jordan River. Nathan was enraged & insulted. Weren’t there better & cleaner rivers in Aram? **Didn’t he deserve to have Elisha come out & perform a great miracle in person**?

**But that’s not God.** Our God often does things quietly yet miraculously. He’s concerned with our obedient response to Him. He’s not about flashy show. He can do things any way He chooses & He usually chooses to act through that quiet whisper, that still voice mentioned earlier. **Many people want to see God put on a great show. It was like that for Jesus** at the cross. People said if He was the Son of God He should get Himself down off the cross—then people would believe in Him. Thank God, He didn’t give in to that distorted thinking, but hung & died there so that we might live. The miraculous isn’t necessarily the spectacular, but staying on the Godly course, faithfully. Thank you, Jesus!

The 2nd Scripture today is also remarkable. Elisha keeps tipping off the king of Israel whenever the king of Aram wants to ambush his army. The king of Aram is badly bent out of shape, believing there’s an informer within his ranks, but a confidant tells him it’s Elisha, who knows even the words the king says in the privacy of his own bedroom. God is everywhere & knows everything. People tend not to believe that. The king of Aram finds out where Elisha is living & surrounds his town of Dothan with chariots & horses. Elisha’s terrified servant asked what they should do. Elisha’s answer is like Jesus’ answer. “Don’t be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them. O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the servant saw the hills full of horses & chariots of fire all around Elisha. If we could only see with spiritual eyes, we would see that we’re surrounded by God’s army, equally waiting to protect us. Has God opened your eyes that you may see the wonder of His love for you?

But that wasn’t the power that was used. As the enemy advance to take Elisha, he prayed they’d be struck with blindness. Then he told the blind men, “This isn’t the road & this is not the city. Follow me & I’ll lead you to the man you’re looking for.” He walked them into Samaria, the capital of Israel. Now here’s the remarkable part of a totally remarkable event. Elisha prayed that God would open the eyes of the Aramean army. They realized they were in Samaria & likely at their life’s end. The king of Israel looked to Elisha’s lead. “Shall I kill them?” Elisha’s answer wasn’t only no. It was, feed them. So, they were all fed & given drink, then sent home. How do you think those Aramean soldiers felt? What do you think they did, subsequent to this?

Beloved, this is how it is with us. We’ve been God’s enemies by rebelling against Him, by sinning. We deserve death, for the wages of sin is death. But the great news is this isn’t the end of the story. God’s grace is the end of the story. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. God’s spared us, He’s given us new life. He’s invited us to His table & fed & nurtured us. Then He’s said, “Go.” Go & live the new life. Go & tell others of the grace of God. Go & tell others of the mercy of God. Go & tell others of the love of God.

Go this week & add to your living a heart & mouth that rejoice in the grace of God, that over-flows to sharing that kind of living & speech with others, that they too would know!