

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 ▫ Read 2Kings 4:1–7

Questions from the Scripture text: Who cries out to Elisha in v1? What does she call her late husband? What does she say Elisha knows about him? But now who was coming? And what was he going to take? What two things does Elisha ask her (v2)? What does she have in the house? What does he tell her to borrow (v3)? From where? From whom? What kind of vessels? What does he warn her not to do? What does he tell her to do when she gets back (v4)? And what will she do with all those vessels? What does v5 summarize? What happens in v6? What does she say to her son? How does he answer? What happens to the oil at that time? Now what does she do in v7? What does he tell her to do with the oil? With the first part of the money? With the rest of it?

For whom does God exercise His mighty power? 2Kings 4:1–7 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the great God is pleased to exercise His almighty power for "the least of these."**

Elisha had asked for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah (cf. 2:9), and the Scriptures record twice as many signs/miracles from Elisha as from Elijah. With this passage begins an extended section recounting those miracles. With whom do the signs begin?

Grace for the Nameless. That's part of the point. We don't get the name of the husband. The widow is left helpless; she's poor enough that the only thing that can pay her debts is the enslavement of her sons. She's about to be bereft of all three of them at one fell swoop. Do you see, dear reader, the care of the grace and power of God for this bankrupt widow of a nameless man? It is she with whom the Lord chooses to begin this string of the signs and miracles of the prophet.

Grace for the Invisible. Sometimes people like this woman seem, or perhaps even feel, invisible. We live in an age in which this is thought to be an injustice. But the Lord often works invisibly among the invisible. There's a fore-echo here in v4 of Mat 6:6. Our Father sees in secret. He works in secret. He rewards in secret. His glory is displayed in all the creation and especially in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He does not perform charity for the PR, however much we may be tempted to. There is a special deliciousness in this woman, behind closed doors with her sons, getting to participate by having collected jars and now pouring the oil, and finding each new jar as a private, personal miracle from the Lord. The text doesn't mention the vessel-collecting, v5 takes us straight from the prophet to the closed door.

Grace for the Soul as well as for the circumstances. We could easily miss the happy simplicity of the transition from v4 to v5. Not only does the brevity emphasize the closed door as we saw above, but it rests upon a wonderful assumption. Whatever Elisha said to her, she did (cf. Jn 2:5). He still hadn't given her the instruction in v7. But she didn't need to know how things would work in order to obey. She simply didn't doubt God's goodness. Truly, this is the conduct of a wife whose husband had feared Yahweh, and whose leadership had been blessed to her and the increase of her faith. She looked for help to the Word of God. She didn't doubt. She obeyed as she was instructed. All of this adds up to a much greater gift from the Lord than the financial means that would get her through to her sons' majority.

Grace beyond what we ask. In the end, the Lord gives her so much that not only is she able to pay off the debt, but she has enough to live. He commands her not just to "sell" and to "pay" in v7 but finally to "live." He Who has given us Christ will give us all things together with Him (cf. Rom 8:32). There isn't a single good or perfect thing that He ever withholds from His children (cf. Jam 1:17). He supplies our needs not according to our understanding but according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus (cf. Php 4:19).

For whom does God exercise almighty power? What are His best gifts to you? What else does He give?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for caring for the least of Your people and delighting in mercy. Forgive us for when we doubt that You are caring for us, or for doing our own charity to be seen by men. Make us confident in Your great generosity toward us and abundantly grateful for it. And, make us to reflect Your generosity toward others we ask, in the Name of Your indescribable gift, our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP109D "I Am Very Poor and Needy" or TPH551 "We Plow the Fields"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second Kings, chapter 4, verses 1 through 7. These are God's words, a certain woman of the wives, of the sons of the prophets. Cried out to Elisha saying your servant to my husband is dead and you know that your servant feared Yahweh and the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.

So at least I said to her, what shall I do for you? Tell me. What do you have in the house? She said you're made servant, has nothing in the house but a jar of oil and he said, go Boro vessels from everywhere from all your neighbors. Empty vessels.

Do not gather just a few and when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you. And your sons, then pour it into all those vessels and set aside the full ones. So, she went from him and shut the door behind her. And her sons who brought the vessels to her and she poured it out.

Now, it came to pass when the vessels were full that she said to her son, bring me another vessel.

She said to her son, bring me another vessel, And he said to her, there is not another vessel. So the oil ceased and she came and told the man of God and he said, go sell the oil and pay your debt and you and your sons live on the rest So far, the reading of God's inspired and in Aaron tort

Well, this begins the section of Second Kings in which several of the a miracles or signs of Elisha are recorded. If we tally them up, we find that the number of miracles record, it of Elisha equals twice. What? That was recorded of Elijah which corresponds to what he had asked, when Elijah was about to be taken up.

And he asked Elisha what he could do for him. And he asked that a double portion of his spirit be given to him. And Elijah says, it's a difficult thing. Meaning that Elijah can't grant it, but he gives him a sign by which he might know that God, because the one who can grant it very similar to how Elijah could throw the mantle upon Elisha when he was calling him to be his, his follower, the one who would stand in his place, according to the prophecy of God, but only God can pour the spirit on the

Elijah.

Just as when Jesus marks someone as part of his church and it's Jesus, who's doing the marking from heaven, Man can only pour water. And all that does is accomplice the marking. But Jesus, who is the one, who who does the marking by man pouring? The water. There's also the one who is able to pour the spirit into his given that to us.

And so we look to him to do that. So here we are at the beginning of the miracles of Elisha. It's very interesting. The first one that he chooses. It's for a nameless person. It's a certain woman of the wise of the sons of the prophets and she calls him Elisha's servant and she calls him her husband and they know who they're talking about.

She says, you know, that you're servant feared Yahweh. But we don't know the name of the woman isn't given the name of the of the husband isn't given. And that's part of the point. The, the Lord helps those who don't really mattered to many people or are known to many people, they matter to the Lord.

They are known to him. The widow is not only left without a husband, she's poor enough. That the only thing that she has for the payment of her debts is the enslavement of her sons. When Elisha asks, what she has on hand, she had a jar of oil and the oil is necessary for food.

The oil is necessary for fuel. In some cases. The oil is necessary for medicine. It's not something that she can easily part with, especially if she has everything else and it's just the one jar. So here she's small in the eyes of the world, even her husband was small in the eyes of the world.

He had racked up debt before before he died, and even having racked up the debt and being a man who feared the Lord, which we assume. Then this debt just comes from the ordinary difficulties of Providence. Not from wastefulness or lack of diligence even after having racked up the debt.

The, the one jar of oil was, the only thing left.

And so the creditor is coming or perhaps. She has racked it up after the, the death I suppose. That's a possibility to depending on how much time is considered to have elapsed in verse 1, but she's a nameless. Woman of a nameless. A husband Nanos Widow of a nameless husband.

And she has nothing so grace for the nameless, is also a grace for the invisible here. When Elijah says, when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons and poor. And then verse 5 That does not describe her going and borrowing vessels from all her neighbors etc.

And how many of them there were and all those things are just so she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons who brought to her, and she poured it out. So she's in there and her son's keep borrowing vessels. But the language of when you go in and shut the door behind you is the same language that the Lord Jesus uses in Matthew chapter 6, about not praying to be seen, but when you pray, you go in and shut the door behind you.

And your father who sees in secret and there's there's something to that here that the only the only ones who are seeing what God is doing. Are the widow and the two boys and got and you know God doesn't need publicity. Not all of his signs needs to be.

For the for the site of many, He has made great display of himself and creation and redemption. And and here he also has given some indication. I mean it's kind of odd that the poor widow and her sons are borrowing all of these empty jars. The neighbors know something is up, but that which the Lord does for her, He does privately between him and her and her sons.

And there's a sweetness to it. There's a deliciousness to having that in confidence to have something that's just between you and God and His mercy to us as often that way. Well, we want to give him praise but there are things in his working with us that are just invisible and would bring too much attention to ourselves if we told about them.

And so we don't tell about them. We just enjoyed the goodness of God to us. It's okay to be nameless and it's okay to be invisible. We have God who bless us? The nameless and God who works among the invisible. And so, I encourage you children to No this God of Second Kings 4, Matthew chapter 6 and develop healthy.

Personal intimate life and interaction with him. Notice there's not just grace for a nameless widow and grace, that operates invisibly. But here grace for her soul, as well as for her circumstances, She is in and great distress at the beginning. And Elijah tells her what to do with the jars when they're empty.

But he doesn't tell her what to do with them and they're fully just as set aside the full ones she doesn't to raise a doubt about the that there would be full ones. She just believably does what he says. And when she has finished up to the amount of instruction that she has so far from the Word of God, the last thing he had said, in verse 4 was set aside the full ones and so in verse 6, she says bring me another vessel and the son says, there isn't another vessel and the oil ceases and then she comes and tells the man of God.

So she just follows what God has told her to do. Perhaps rather than selling the oil, she was going to be told to give it over to the man of God and the school of the prophets. After all of this was a lot more than was needed, just to pay her debts.

And so she does as much as she's been instructed and then she comes, and she gets more instruction. And so there's faith here and there's obedience and there's even possibly implied here. Some some self-lessness and she's diligent. She does what what the Lord has told her to do. Right.

Cut through to the end of it. There's no sense in the text of of any slacking. The work that God doesn't her heart Often. When we are in the most difficult of our circumstances, in this life and it puts us in a place where the question is really answered.

Are we going to believe what God has said about his goodness to us about his overruling? Everything about his making them work, for our good, that if he didn't spare, his own son, but gave him for us. And he as much certainly together with him, giving us all things and so forth.

So often in our most difficult circumstances, it brings out of us. Are we gonna believe what God has said? Are we still going to be diligent and work? Hard. Are we going to be obedient? Are we going to leave room for the possibility of selflessness and generosity with others?

Even though we are in very difficult circumstances, Are we going to have enough hope? And God that if he gives us the opportunity to be generous with someone else, we won't be. So consumed with the difficulty of our own circumstances that we that we would be closed hearted or closed-handed towards others.

You see all of all of these things that he brought out of her and probably grace gracious work that was done in the difficulty of the circumstance. Not just that was brought out by the difficulty of the circumstance. So in one place, the Apostles say that the light and momentary afflictions aren't worth comparing with the eternal weight of glory.

That will be shown to us or shown in us. And then in another place, the Apostle says that light and momentary afflictions are working for us, an eternal weight of glory. And so you see that there's grace for the soul in these circumstances and of course, also, there's grace far, beyond what we can ask says, go sell the oil and pay your debt and what does he tell her to do with the rest?

Bring it back and take care of the rest of the school of the prophets. No, he says go pay your, it's all the oil paged that. And you and your sons live on the rest. So not only are the debts taken away, but she and her sons are going to be able to have enough from this that they won't live the life of the poor.

They're gleaning in that 17th of the land that isn't supposed to be harvested. Although we don't know if Israel was obeying that Boaz, it seems to be an exception in the scripture, or the corners of the field or begging as many of them ended up having to do. And you know, the Lord, the answers the situation results, the situation above, probably what she could have expected when she comes in verse 1 and cries out to Elisha.

So grace beyond, even what we ask Grace for the nameless person grace, that operates invisibly, and the delight that we have in the intimacy that that gives us with God. Grace for our souls as well as resolving. The circumstances God works in us by the circumstances and uses the circumstances to show his work in us and grace.

That is beyond what we ask. So it's just seven verses but a blessed portion of Scripture and wonderful way for God to start out for us. This section of the miracles that the scriptures record for us of Elisha. Let's pray.

Lord. We thank you that you are gracious. God, that you have shown us. This not only in the wonderful provision and design goodness of your creation, but especially in your indescribable gift, our Lord Jesus, giving yourself for us in him to us in him. And then we thank you for the way that you work graciously in our lives.

We pray that you would give us confidence that you always see and notice that we won't feel the need to be something in the eyes of others. But rejoice make our hearts to rejoice that you have counted us as something. You have loved us, You have chosen us, You have bound yourself to us.

And so you have given us the esteem and in your own eyes. Father. Oh, forgive us. When having you and being valued by, you is so small to us that we pine after others to value us to truly, we are not worthy of such love. As you have given us but you give it because you are worthy and because you are good.

We bless your name for it, So we pray that you had blessed to us. This passage that you would hold before us the greatness and the glory of your grace and of your goodness which we praise. And all of this, we ask and Jesus name. Amen.