

## **The Story – Elisha**

### **Nothing But A Little Oil**

It's Mother's Day and we want to recognize and honor all of the ladies today. Thank God for the mothers that birthed us, raised us, loved and mentored us, that have blessed us in our lives. That may be one person or it may be more than one, but we are thankful today for the godly women that have blessed and impacted our lives! Happy Mother's Day!

Last Sunday we talked about Elijah as part of The Story Series. Pastor Brian is the one that laid out all of the Sundays and the stories we would cover. He knew it would be a challenge for me to stick to the list. I told him Friday morning in the hospital that I was going to make another change. He said I was stressing him out! Actually, he left Mother's Day open so I could preach whatever I wanted to preach. I decided rather than talking about Hosea and his wife Gomer on Mother's Day, I decided to go to a story involving a desperate single mother, a widow in fact, and the prophet Elisha. Turn with me to 2 Kings 4 and let's look at this story.

Let me remind you that Elijah was the prophet we talked about last Sunday that dealt with the wicked king Ahab and his wife Jezebel. You remember after fire fell on Mt. Carmel and Elijah had the prophets of baal killed, he had to run for his life from Queen Jezebel. It was during that time in the wilderness God told Elijah he was to anoint Elisha as his successor. Elisha followed Elijah until Elijah was caught up to heaven in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire. The mantle fell on Elisha as the new prophet in Israel and we immediately see Elisha performing miracles as he is led by the hand of God. Ahab's son Joram becomes king of Israel and reigns for 12 years. You won't be surprised if I tell you that Joram did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but actually he was not as evil as his parents. It is during this time that Elisha encounters a widow whose husband had been part of the school of prophets. He was one of those 7,000 that God said remained faithful to Him during the reign of Ahab. Her husband had refused to sacrifice to baal or worship him, but then sadly he died, leaving a wife and two young sons.

We don't know how he died, but what we do know is that a godly man died and left his family in desperate circumstances. Look at 2 Kings 4, **“The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, ‘Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.’”** 2 Kings 4:1

Her husband was a man of outstanding character, known by Elisha and probably Elijah as well. Now he was dead and the creditor was coming to collect. Mosaic law allowed for the creditor to take the children of the debtor as servants or slaves in payment for the debt they owed. They would work until the debt was paid or until the year of Jubilee when slaves were to be set free. We don't know how large the debt, but think of this young prophet as a seminary student and you get the idea it might have been substantial. We don't know how close it was to a Jubilee year, but even if it was just a year, this poor widow was going to be separated from her boys who would become slaves to the creditor. It's a desperate situation. Some of you know what it's like to have your children taken from you for some reason. You know how desperate this mother is feeling when she cries out to Elisha the prophet, which is another way of saying she cried out to God.

She doesn't come right out and say it, but you can read between the lines. "My husband revered the Lord. Elisha you knew him. He was one of the prophets that followed you and Elijah and never compromised his faith, but now he is dead and we are destitute. Why would God let this happen? Does God care about us?" Keep in mind that Ahab and Jezebel had put to death hundreds of God's prophets. It appears her husband had escaped execution but then died from some other cause. Is this fair or right?

We think serving the Lord exempts us from trouble or sickness or death. It doesn't. People still die, sometimes too young, like this husband. Life's not fair but God is always faithful. God is still at work causing things to work together for good. Watch!

The response from Elisha is interesting. "**How can I help you?**" Which it looks pretty obvious, doesn't it? "Give me enough money to pay the creditor so he won't take my sons!" That's the obvious answer and solution. But Elisha and God have a better, stronger, more important lesson to teach this widowed mother and us. Elisha asks, "**Tell me, what do you have in your house?**" And the mother says, "**Your servant has nothing there at all, except a little oil.**" **2 Kings 4:2**

Let's visit that statement for a moment. "Nothing...except a little oil." She underestimated what she had. The word there indicates it was like a small jar of ceremonial oil, anointing oil. She was honest. It wasn't much oil at all, and yet she underestimated what she could make available to the Lord for his use. She underestimated what she really had. She had more than a little oil. She had two sons, she had neighbors willing to help her, she still had a

house even though the creditor was coming after it, and she still had a relationship with a Mighty God. She still had faith, even though her husband was dead and the creditor was coming for her sons, she still believed God. I believe she had more than she recognized, more than she knew.

You may be feeling like this widowed mother. I've got nothing at all, except a little oil. Look around. Take stock. You may have more than you think. You may have more blessing than you first thought, more potential than you thought, more resources for God to use and multiply than you thought. What do you have?

"Nothing at all, except a little oil." You might need to rethink your situation. What do you have? Nothing, except what I can put into the hands of a faithful God. Stop and think of it this way. "I've got nothing but a little oil." Then ask Him, "Lord, what do you have?" and hear him say, "I have everything else! I have more than enough! You have oil and I have all the rest!"

**When you have God's grace and presence at work in your life, you don't have "nothing except..." you have more than enough!** Mom, you have more than you realize. I know it seems like such a meager amount, but God can take that little bit of oil and turn it into more than enough if you will trust him and obey him! Stop and realize the basis for your miracle may be in your own hands, in your own house, right now. Elisha didn't hand her the money, but he showed her the path God had for her that led to her needs being met. God can take that simple thing, something that is already in your hand and turn it into miraculous provision.

All this widowed mother had was a little bit of oil. Next to nothing, but all God needs is your willingness to obey. Give it to God and watch what happens. **"Elisha said, 'Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.' 2 Kings 4:3-4**

Something significant happens right here. This mother, this widow, makes a decision that she is going to trust God. She is going to put this whole thing in His hands. She didn't hesitate. She didn't say this is crazy! She didn't say to Elisha, "Did I not make myself clear? I don't have oil to pour into these jars! What are you asking?" Instead, she tells her sons, "Go to the neighbors, go across town, go to every house you see and ask for empty jars. Tell them it's for a science project, tell them your mom's gone crazy, I don't care, just go get empty jars.

God's getting ready to do something in our house!" They were preparing for God's blessing. Are you? Trust and obedience is the key.

Mom and her boys collect all the jars they can get. She closes the door behind her and her sons. It's a private moment of faith for this family, for this mother and her sons. Can you just imagine this moment? Mom takes out this little bit of anointing oil and then says to the boys, "Here we go boys. We are trusting God. We are obeying his word. Hand me an empty jar!"

I can't help but think her hands are trembling as she begins to pour from that tiny container into that larger empty jar. She is trusting God, but there have been some disappointments along the way. She trusted before but things didn't turn out the way she planned. She was going to grow old with her husband. You know she prayed and yet her husband died. But this is what the prophet said to do. Somewhere inside she is saying, "This is what I know to do, regardless of what's happened in the past, I'm going to trust God and obey Him." She lifts that little container of oil and begins to pour and it just keeps pouring. She fills the jar and says, "Set this one aside and get me another one, quickly!" Look at how the bible cloaks a miracle in such a common statement: **"They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring." 2 Kings 4:5** She kept pouring! Are you hearing that? She had nothing but a little oil, but she kept pouring. Matthew Henry said, "The oil was multiplied in the pouring." She obeyed the prophet. She acted in faith. She poured and kept on pouring and God filled and kept on filling! She trusted God and imagine the joy in that house as empty jar after empty jar turned into God's abundant provision.

Listen to me: like this widow lady who said she had nothing except a little oil, you have more than you think. Your little bit placed into the hands of a mighty God become more than enough. What do you have? Are you willing to pour it into God's hands? What do you have? Are you willing to surrender yourself, your plans, your future, your relationships, your ideas, your goals and dreams, are you willing to surrender that to the Lord because if you will keep bringing yourself and your life to the Lord, he will keep filling you up! As long as you are trusting him and bringing yourself to the Lord, he will keep on giving. As long as you are bringing him something he can fill, he will keep on pouring himself into your life.

The bible says **"When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.' But he replied, 'There is not a jar left.' Then the oil stopped flowing." 2 Kings 4:6**

I've heard preachers talk about her lack of faith. "If she had only had more faith she would have gathered up more jars." I think she had so much faith that she and her sons had collected every empty jar in town. I doubt there was a single empty jar left anywhere in town.

**"She went and told the man of God and he said, 'Go sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.'" 2 Kings 4:7**

She didn't go buy a new car, she paid her debt first. She owed that creditor and God provided so she could do the right thing and pay her debt. But then Elisha said "you and the boys can live off of what is left." Notice this: she still had a part to play in all this. Elisha didn't just hand her the money. After God miraculously provided the oil, she still had to sell it in order to get the money to pay the creditors. She had a part to play, but God did what only he could do and it was more than enough to meet the needs.

Elisha said, "Go sell the oil and pay your debts then you and your sons can live on what is left." I thought about the impact of what Elisha said – live on what is left. They lived on the proceeds from selling the oil, but you know what else struck me? I believe this widow and her sons lived on the legacy and the testimony of what God had done for them for the rest of their lives. Don't you imagine that mother reminded her sons over and over again of the faithfulness of their God. If they ever started to doubt God, ever started to disobey, all she had to do was remind them of the oil. They lived on the testimony of God's faithful provision!

I don't know what you are facing. You may be in circumstances as desperate as this widowed mother. Maybe you are dealing with grief like she was. Maybe you are dealing with the potential legal loss of a child like she was. Maybe you are just wondering how you can make it when all you have is nothing except a little bit..." Hear the lesson from this widowed mother: God can take your little bit of nothing and if you will surrender it to him and obey him, he can turn it into something miraculous. He can turn your little bit of nothing into more than enough. She didn't just pay her bills, she had oil to sell to provide for her family's future. She didn't just get enough to pay her bills, God gave her security, income, blessing.

Where did she start? Widowhood. Poverty. Indebtedness. Insecurity. Legal problems. But on the other side of obedience and surrender and trust there is blessing, provision and victory! They were living on the overflow weren't they? Offer yourself to him today. Surrender yourself to him as the empty vessel and let him pour into your life. He won't stop pouring if you won't stop giving yourself to God in obedience!