

## The Needs of the One

2 Kings 4:1-7

### Introduction

- One of the things we do on either Mother's Day or Father's Day is our Parent/Child Dedication. One of my favorite part is when we hear stories about how parents have chosen their children's names. Sometimes it's a family name, or a popular name, and sometimes it's the meaning of the name that what matters.
- In 1 Kings 19:19-20, a prophet named Elijah called a man named Elisha to be his successor. Elijah's name means "The Lord is my God," and Elisha's name means, "The Lord is my salvation." The difference in these two names signals the difference in their respective ministries.
- In 2 Kings 4:1-7, Elisha stepped in to save a nameless widow & her children.
  - Since this is Mother's Day, it would be a good day to look a passage of Scripture where God's concern for women, mothers, & widows is particularly clear.
  - These ladies are too often overlooked, oppressed, & marginalized.
- But the 1<sup>st</sup> in a series of 8 miracles that Elisha perform teaches us that **God is concerned for both the needs of the one and the needs of the many.**
  - If followed, the Mosaic Law would provide justice, righteous, and human flourishing among the Israelites. (the needs of the many)
  - Elisha didn't come to replace the Law or overthrow Israel's king, but to steer the monarch & society towards mercy & grace. (the needs of the one)
- It reminds me of that special customer service representative who acknowledges the long line but still takes the time to provide a customized solution to your problem. Ladies (and gentlemen), you are more than a number to God!
- In today's passage God's concern for the needs of the one – the individual – is drawn out to highlight His care & provision through the miracle of the oil. (Read passage)

### Body

#### I. God cares for the needs of the one. (v. 15-20)

##### A. He cares when the needs are serious. (v. 1)

1. Jewish tradition says this woman was the wife of Obadiah, the servant of King Ahab who risked his life to save 100 prophets in 1 Ki. 18:3-4.
2. At this point, her husband's death has brought a large debt on her family.
  - a. According to Ex. 21:1-11, the creditor was within his rights to take the widow's 2 sons as servants for up to 6 years.
  - b. This would have had a devastating impact on her & her family.
3. The woman was unable to pay so she cried out in desperation.

##### B. He cares when the resources are small. (v. 2-4)

1. Elisha asks if she had anything valuable in her house.
2. The woman acknowledges that she has a modest amount of olive oil.
  - a. Used for cooking, & lighting, olive oil was a valuable commodity.
  - b. Evidently, she didn't have enough oil to pay her debt.
3. Elisha told her to borrow as many vessels as she could before going home and closing the door.

- a. The prophet sets the stage for a miracle, but he's not present.
- b. She leaned on direction from the prophet, & generosity from her neighbors, but the real miracle would come directly from God.
- c. As a family of faith, we can offer direction and help for those who are in need, but God is the one who extends His care to the needy.

#### II. He provides for the needs of the one.

##### A. He provides by growing their faith. (v. 5-6)

1. The woman gathers the vessels and her 2 sons in her home.
  - a. Whenever she fills another jar, her son hands her another.
  - b. The oil continues to pour until every borrowed vessel was full.
2. I've heard bible teachers talk about the number of vessels that she borrowed.
  - a. As if the whole thing is math story problem & the number of vessels that were filled was a quantitative measure of her faith.
  - b. But faith isn't a quantity, it's a quality – going from not believe that God could met her need to believing that He would.

##### B. He provides by securing their future. (v. 7)

1. The story ends where it starts, with a conversation between the widow and the man of God.
  - a. The goes from death to a new lease on life.
  - b. The widow goes from being in debt to paying her debt.
2. The proceeds from the oil pay the debt & finance the rest of their life.
  - a. There's definitely financial angle here: God met her material needs.
  - b. There is also a spiritual angle: God met her spiritual needs.
  - c. He meets here individual need for a relationship will also meeting the needs of the nation through the Law.

### Conclusion

- This Mother's Day lets celebrate the way God meets the needs of women, mothers, & widows.
  - He cares for and provides for their needs and the needs of anyone who can be vulnerable or marginalized.
  - He not just the God for the influential, dominant, high-profile, rich, wealthy, well-off, strong, powerful, or imposing – He's the God of the needy!
  - He balances his concern for the individual with His attention for society as a whole. Like the shepherd in the Parable of the Lost sheep, he leaves the 99 sheep safe on the mountains and then ventures down into the valley to search for the one that is lost. When He finds it, He rejoices over it! (Matt. 18:12-14)
- **May we join God in His concerned for the needs of the one.**
  - Maybe that means older women pouring into the spiritual lives of and discipling younger women in the church?
  - Maybe a small gift or helping hand for a single-mom working to make ends meet?
  - Maybe that means inviting a widow over for meal & getting to know them?
- **God is concerned for the needs of the one and sometimes He meets those needs through us.**