

Great Things He Has Done

(II Kings 8:4b)

Session 1 - The Provision of the Oil

Talkback With Pastor Karyn

II Kings 4:1-7

- 1) Do you agree that human beings tend to focus on what they do *not* have instead of what they *do* have? What practices in the life of the Church might help us (individually and corporately) to recognize God-given resources which may not initially be acknowledged? How might the outreach of our congregations advance if we learn to focus on abundance instead of scarcity?

Go Deeper

- 2) Compare II Kings 4:1-7 with I Kings 17: 7-16. What are the common points in these two narratives? What are some differences?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review Philippians 4:10-20 to hear a Pauline theology of stewardship. Can you say with Paul (v. 11b): *"I am content with whatever I have"* ? (cf. Luke 3:14b) Do you *"...know what it is to have plenty...in any and all circumstances"* ? (v. 12, cf. I Timothy 6:17b). Cite examples of how God has done Great Things in terms of satisfying *"...every need of yours."* (v. 19). Why do you think so many in the Church struggle with the practice of financial stewardship?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #130 ("God Will Take Care of You") in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today's lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

"While the musician was playing, the power of the Lord came on him" (II Kings 3:15b)

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Session 2 - He Revives the Stricken

Talkback With Pastor Sukja

II Kings 4:8-37

- 1) In the midst of crisis, what gives you the confidence of the Shunamite woman to say, “*It will be all right*” (v. 23)? Give testimony of occasions when healing *has* occurred. Sometimes, of course, “healing” is some alternate from what we had originally hoped, yet “...*being different can be a blessing.*” How so? How can we bring hope to persons in crisis who are feeling hopeless?

Go Deeper

- 2) Again, the scriptures repeat themselves: compare II Kings 4:8-37 with I Kings 17:17-24. What are the common points in these two narratives? What are some differences?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review John 4:46-54 for an episode when Jesus heals a child. Talk about your Church’s ministry of healing today. What is the role of *faith* (Matthew 9:22) in healing? ‘Of *human touch* (Matthew 9:18, 25)? ‘Of *prayer*? How does your church employ physical healings as a *sign* (John 4:54) which points others to Christ?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #458 (“Dear Lord, for All in Pain”) in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today’s lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?
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Session 3 - Give Them Something to Eat

Talkback with Pastor Candy

II Kings 4:38-44

- 1) This scene reveals much about the nature of God when confronted by *famine* (v.38). Who is this God? When the people of God are aware of famine, what does the Lord require of us? What power has God given us to purify and multiply food today?

Go Deeper

- 2) The scene in Exodus 16:1-30 provides context for Elisha's ministry of food-provision in Gilgal. What does that narrative suggest about God's intention to provide the hungry with *as much as each of them needed* (v. 18b)? What does it reveal about the human propensity to hoard food for ourselves (v. 20)? Talk about your church's hunger ministries today. How do those ministries invite folks to personal faith in God (v. 12b)?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review Mark 8:1-9. Talk about Jesus' compassion for the hungry, and the disciples' skepticism about the ability to satisfy all in the crowd. What's important about the detail mentioning some food *left over* (v. 8)? Look for other clues in the Gospels (Matthew 14:14-21, 15:32-38, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14) about the Church's imperative to *Serve the People and Let them Eat*.

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #427 ("Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life") in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today's lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

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Session 4 - Care for the Stranger

Talkback with Pastor Stew

II Kings 5:1-15a

- 1) How well-trained are our ushers and greeters to welcome strangers who come into our assemblies (James 2:1-4)? What does the story of Naaman suggest about God's nature to extend mercy and grace to foreigners? Discuss the value added to your church community of certain folks who initially may have been viewed as "outsiders."

Go Deeper

- 2) Jewish narratives often celebrate foreigners of note who experience a conversion and worship the God of Israel. Recall Rahab (Joshua 2:11), and the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-9)...and especially those various kings of Babylon (Daniel 2:46-47, 3:28-29, 4:34-37, and 6:25-27). What "hope" does this feature of the holy scriptures reveal about a biblical theology? How does it help to insulate against any nationalism in the people of God?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review Mark 7:24-30 where Jesus extends the blessings of his kingdom beyond the children of Israel. How does Matthew's story-telling capture not only the essence of first century Jewish parochialism, but also its rebuttal? Remember how another New Testament author (Luke) celebrates the inclusion of a foreigner (Acts 8:26-38) as one of the early, important victories in the Church. How is your congregation today involved in ministries which care for foreigners and aliens, and promote an understanding of a God who is *God in all the earth* (II Kings 5:15)?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #121 ("There's a Wideness in God's Mercy") in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today's lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

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Session 5 - The Floating Ax Head

Talkback with Pastor Kofi

II Kings 6:1-7

- 1) Review the pattern of *reversal* that we've seen in the Wonder Stories of Elisha so far. How does the Floating Ax Head story add to this theme? What's the good news about God that this tale promotes? How can we share with others our confidence about a God who rescues in times of distress?

Go Deeper

- 2) The holy scriptures use a lot of images of building and construction to deepen our faith in God. Review Psalm 127:1a, Proverbs 14:1 (and 24:3-4), Matthew 7:24-27, I Corinthians 3:10-17, Ephesians 2:19-22. Talk about your own congregation's involvement in *housing* ministries. How do those missions point others toward God? How do they build up faith in the workers themselves?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review Luke 15:3-10. Beyond the deeper theological theme of Sin/Repentance here, recognize the more basic experience of Joy (v.6, 9) when God intervenes in everyday life to recover something that was lost. Do you ever experience God in this way? Share a "Trouble-Rescue" episode from your own life which some people may explain as coincidence, but where YOU credit God.

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #132 ("All My Hope is Firmly Grounded") in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today's lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

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Session 6 - An Enemy Attack Thwarted

Talkback with Pastor Jim

II Kings 6:8-23

- 1) II Kings 6:8-23 artfully contrasts images of *blindness* vs. *sight*. Who in this scene has excellent vision? Who in this scene has difficulty seeing with clarity? When Elisha prays, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see” (v. 17a), whom is he praying for...really?

Go Deeper

- 2) Jewish wisdom literature teaches that undeserved kindness can sometimes awaken remorse in adversaries and lead to peace (Proverbs 25:21-22). Have you ever experienced this personally? In New Testament times, Romans 12:18-21 expands this philosophy. Notice the imagery of *the meal* in each context. What does this suggest about the power and the potential (the *grace* available) in the Church’s great feast of bread and cup?

Great Things in the Church

- 3) Review John 13:12-35 for another biblical scene where “...*thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*” (Psalm 23:5a KJV) Peace-making is not always immediate. In what ways is peace-making in this first century Upper Room limited? In what ways is it successful?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #620 (“One Bread, One Body”) in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today’s lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?
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Session 7 - Bones that Bring Life

Talkback with Pastor Jenny

II Kings 13:14-21

- 1) Our hero in this study is Elisha, but what is the real source of resurrection power in this eight century Jewish cemetery? How does that same power manifest itself in a first century Jewish garden (John 19:41)? How does the proclamation that *Christ is Risen* energize you? Identify your worst fears and/or the church's worst enemies: what does it mean to say that because Jesus lives, *you have made an end of them?* (II Kings 13:17b)

Go Deeper

- 2) A Jewish apocryphal text called Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of Sirach) includes a wonderful tribute to the prophet Elisha. Review this hymn from Ecclesiasticus 48:12-14 -“When Elijah was enveloped in the whirlwind, Elisha was filled with his spirit. He performed twice as many signs, and marvels with every utterance of his mouth.^[a] Never in his lifetime did he tremble before any ruler, nor could anyone intimidate him at all. Nothing was too hard for him, and when he was dead, his body prophesied. In his life he did wonders, and in death his deeds were marvelous.” Remind yourselves (from our study over the past weeks) of those events where we see *repeatedly* the “resurrection” motif in the Old Testament Elisha cycle.

Great Things in the Church

- 3) For an interesting Easter tradition often overshadowed in the Church, review Matthew 27:50-53. Recall the resuscitations accomplished by Jesus in life (Matthew 9:25, Luke 7:15, and John 11:44), as well as those in the early Church (Acts 9:40 and Acts 20:10). Jesus commands his disciples: “*Raise the dead!*” (Matthew 10:8). How’s that working for your church today? Where are you using resurrection power to bring life to that which was empty, sunken, or hopeless?

Get Me a Musician

- 4) Read or sing through hymn #318 (“Christ Is Alive”) in the United Methodist Hymnal. How does this hymn amplify the theme of today’s lesson? Which particular lines or phrases speak to you?

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