



FILLING A MOTHER'S EMPTINESS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: 2 Kings 4:1-7 (NASB)

1 Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves." 2 Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil." 3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. 4 And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full." 5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured. 6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest."

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **Filling a Mother's Emptiness** is to remind us that God wants to take our pain and teach us to depend on His comfort and provision.

INTRODUCTION:

A woman once told a friend of hers, "I've got so many problems in my life right now that if anything else goes wrong, it'll take me two weeks before I can get around to worrying about it." Sometimes life gets that way, doesn't it? It's just one thing on top of another thing, on top of another thing, on top of another thing and it just goes on and on. And sometimes you want to throw in the towel. That's a problem because sometimes you throw in the towel and the ref still won't call off the fight, it just keeps coming. If your car breaks down, well you know where to go to find a mechanic. If your clothes are torn, you know to go to find a tailor. If the grades are failing, you get a tutor. But where do you turn when your life falls apart?

Today's passage tells us about a woman, a mother in crisis. Her world was falling apart. First of all, this mother was in emotional pain because her husband had died. Now we know

she was hurting because 2 Kings 4:1 says, "she cried out." And there are people here today who are in emotional pain. Perhaps somebody in your world has died. Or maybe you have lost someone relationally or emotionally, perhaps through a divorce, or some other problem that has created heartache.

Not only did this woman have emotional pain, but she had financial pain. Second Kings 4:1 says, "the creditors are at the door." Now everybody here can identify with that. The bills just keep on coming and we can't pay them. The cost of gasoline has put all of us in this category.

But not only was she in financial pain, she was in maternal pain because she says in 2 Kings 4:1, "they've come to take my two children to be slaves." During the time of the prophets, it was lawful for the children to work off the debts of the parents. So as you can see, no money, no husband, and she's losing her kids. This is too much for anyone to handle.

But not only was she in maternal pain, she was in physical pain—she was hungry. She said in 2 Kings 4:2, "all I have is a small jar of oil." She couldn't pay her bills and she couldn't go to the grocery store. Her stomach was churning. You know how it feels to want to get something to eat and for whatever reason not be able to get to it. It's much worse when you're out of food and there's no money to buy anything.

But then it got really bad. Not only was she in emotional, physical, financial, and maternal pain, but she was in spiritual pain. In 2 Kings 4:1 she says, "You know your servant, my husband feared the Lord."

Nothing is worse than fearing God and not being able to locate Him when you need Him. That's spiritual pain. She told the prophet that her husband feared the Lord and led his family to do the same. But God took her husband away, allowed her resources to run out, and she was about to lose her children. I'm sure she wondered, Where is the payoff for fearing God?

our society's problem
is not solely our *government's* problem.
it is **the church's** problem.
it is *our* problem.





TEACHING POINTS:

1. GOD'S WAY IS THE BEST WAY TO FIX LIFE'S PROBLEMS

Seek God's Word for your dilemma

- Human opinion won't solve your problems
- The Holy Spirit will give you guidance

Present your emptiness, not your fullness, to God

- Pride, depending on our self-sufficiency, prevents God from working in our lives (James 4:6)
- Humility, recognizing our insufficiency, opens the door for God's solution to your problems (1 Peter 5:5)

2. GOD IS OUR SOURCE AND PROVIDER

Give to others what you yourself need from God (Luke 6:38)

- It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)
- By hoarding we cut off God's blessing

Step out in faith and believe that God will provide

- Give to others when you feel empty (2 Kings 4:3)
- God will refill what you give away (2 Kings 4:6)

3. GOD'S WAY IS TRUSTWORTHY

Trust God enough to act on what He says

- Walking by faith means acting like what God said is actually true (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- Faith is measured by our feet, not our feelings

Listen to God's Word and obey it

- The poor widow listened to Elijah's prophetic word (2 Chronicles 20:20)
- God's ways are higher than our ways, even though they sometimes defy logic (Isaiah 55:8)

4. GOD IS MORE GENEROUS THAN WE THINK (2 KINGS 4:7; EPHESIANS 3:20)

Trust that God rewards obedience

- God provided more than the poor widow needed
- The poor widow had enough oil to pay off her creditors

Trust that God moves in His timing

- When God gets ready to move, He moves fast!
- In six verses God provided enough for the poor widow to retire

5. GOD WILL POWERFULLY MULTIPLY OUR RESOURCES

Search Scripture for examples of God's power to work through meager means

- In the Old Testament, Moses used a stick to part the Red Sea (Exodus 7:10); David used a sling shot to kill Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45); and Samson used the jawbone of a donkey to kill 1,000 Philistines (Judges 5:15-16)
- In the New Testament, Jesus multiplied a few loaves and fish to feed 5,000 people (John 6:9-13)

Give God everything you have, even if it's not much

- God will take what Christians give Him in faith and multiply it for His glory
- God wants our faith and our poverty, not our wealth and self-sufficiency

TEACHING ILLUSTRATIONS:

GOD'S WAY IS TRUSTWORTHY: Human solutions to our problems are like junk food. The problem with junk food is that when the real stuff (God's solution) comes along, you don't have room to receive it. Because junk food has a way of curbing your appetite for the real thing when it's time to get as much of that as you can take. You know what we do? We settle for donuts when it comes to life's issues. So there's no room for God's answer when it comes.

WALKING BY FAITH: Faith must be obedience in motion, not in discussion. If there is no motion there is no faith, no matter how faithish you feel. We must exercise faith. Exercise means to work out, right? Do you know how many people talk about working out? Many people discuss it for years. How many people in this congregation this morning have been talking about joining the gym for several years? You just feel like it, but you never actually make it to the gym. Many people feel workoutish. But unless you get on the treadmill, it's meaningless chatter. Faith requires action.

LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH: I was over at the gym one time and this lady came in and she was decked out for a workout. She was impeccably dressed. And you know that someone is serious about working when they have wrist bands and a band around their head. She had a towel over her shoulder. She started off by warming up on the treadmill for 5 minutes. Then she went over to the bench press and did seven reps. She did five minutes on the treadmill and seven reps on the bench press, then dabbed her head with a towel, and left. She was there for all of eight minutes. But don't get me wrong, if you would've looked at her, you would've said that lady is serious. I mean





she dressed the part. She had all the paraphernalia of it. It's like coming on Sunday mornings. We dress the part, we've got the Bible under our arm. We've got all the paraphernalia of Christianity. But are we really serious about the life of faith? If so, our obedience is the proof of our faith. Faith has to be demonstrated in order to be authentically declared.

BACKGROUND BIBLICAL HISTORY AND CULTURE:

CHILD SLAVERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST: In the ancient Near East at the time of Elisha and the poor widow, creditors often took the children of debtors who couldn't pay their bills as slaves. In Exodus 21:2-4, the Mosaic Law permitted Hebrews to take other Hebrews as slaves for six years, but they had to be released during the Year of Jubilee.

HUMILITY: The Hebrew word for humility (הַיָּגִיט) indicates meekness and insufficiency. One who is humble is bowed down and poor. A humble person, like the poor widow in 2 Kings 4, recognizes his or her own insufficiency and depends on the Lord to provide.

PRIDE: The Hebrew word for pride (וַיָּדָז) indicates insolence, presumptuous, godlessness, and disobedience. One who is proud depends on his or her own self-sufficiency. God hates pride and resists those who refuse to admit their need for Him.

TEACHING LINES:

This sermon will help you trust God when your life seems to crumble around you.

This sermon will outline five aspects of God's generous provision when we come to Him with humble faith.

QUOTES ATTRIBUTED TO DR. TONY EVANS:

"You will never discover that God is all you need until you get to the place where God is all you have."

"One of the reasons why we're not seeing God break through is we come to Him with our fullness, not with our emptiness. We present to God our fullness, in fact, we're so full there's no room, there's nothing left for God to do. It's easy to do that. The Bible has a word for that, it's called pride."

"The Bible has a word for emptiness. It's called humility. Humility, is a recognition of your own insufficiency."

"Faith is tied to feet, walking, movement. You know you have faith by what you do."

"Faith has to be demonstrated in order to be authentically declared."

"God doesn't need a lot to do a lot."

"It is your emptiness, not your fullness that God responds to."

"When you get too proud to beg, when you get so sufficient and your pride keeps you from needing Him, you won't hear from Him."



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**our mission field is not merely across the sea.
it is across the street.**

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“You will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea
and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
Acts 1:8

**That includes in our Jerusalem. In our Judea.
In Baltimore. Dallas. Miami. Detroit.**

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