

2 Kings 4:1-7

“A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.” So 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 but a jar of oil.” Then he said, “Go, borrow 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.” And he said to her, “There is not another vessel” So the oil ceased. 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 live on the rest.”

What ability or abilities does one need to be a witness for God? What training should one undergo to be a positive witness for God? What skills does one need to serve God? This past October in Miami a local police officer, Vicki Thomas, answered a call to a local grocery store. Once there Officer Thomas was told by the store manager how a woman, Jessica Robles, was caught leaving the store with a cart full of groceries which she had not paid for.

Officer Thomas spoke with Ms. Robles and informed her because of the amount of food she had been caught with was under \$300 it would be at her discretion whether to arrest her or give her a misdemeanor charge and a promise to appear in court. Officer Thomas chose the latter. Instead of arresting her, officer Thomas allowed Ms. Robles to promise she would appear in court, but then she did something else she did something outside what she was trained to do; she bought Robles a little over \$100 worth of groceries:

Officer Thomas said “I made the decision to buy her some groceries because arresting her wasn’t going to solve the problem with her children being hungry.”

There was no denying they were hungry. Robles' 12 year old daughter started crying when she told local TV station WSVN about how dire their situation was: "It's not fun to see my little brother dirty and hungry, asking for food, and we have to tell him, 'There is nothing here to eat.'" Officer Thomas says she had no question that what she did was the right thing to do: "To see those children go through the bags when we brought them in, it was like Christmas. That \$100 to me was worth it."

Officer Thomas did have one request: "The only thing she asked of her was, when she gets on her feet, that she helps someone else out, and she said she would." But see this story did not stop there. After word got out about what happened people donated another \$700 for Jessica Robles to spend at the grocery store. And on top of this out pouring from individuals a local business owner invited her in for an interview and ended up hiring her as a customer service rep.

Ms. Robles said, "There are no words how grateful I am that you took your time and helped somebody out. Especially somebody like me." And to think it all started with one veteran police officer trusting her "instinct" instead of going "by the book".

These past couple of weeks we have been talking about over-coming obstacles in our lives which interfere and/or prevent us from placing God first and foremost in our lives; about fully serving Him in all we say and do. Remember this; it's not what we do for God. It's what we say to God ... yes or no. Yes God I am here and have burned my plow and am continually digging ditches for you to fill. Or no God I will burn my plow, but not at this time and I cannot dig any ditches for you to fill, at least not right now, maybe later.

One point we need to understand is that just because one has decided to burn their plow and dig those ditches does not mean they will be going to seminary and then to some far off mission field. God may be calling you to a greater ministry; that ministry might not be in some far off mission field, it could be right where you are planted. But I can't preach ... I can't teach ... I can't do this or I can't do that ... these are the statements made every-day from people concerning themselves and serving God. Before you say you can't do something let's see what God thinks.

Thinking about what we can do for God let's look at our passage this morning. *"So 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, nothing but a jar of oil.'"* Elisha asked this woman two questions: "What do you need?" and "What do you have?" We think those are two easy questions to answer. She needed everything and she believed she had nothing to help her in her current situation, nothing *"but a jar of oil."*

This woman didn't realize it at the time, but God could, He could see the hidden treasure she did have. You see she didn't know it, but in that jar of oil was an oil well an over flowing oil well; in that jar of oil was a gold mine just waiting to be opened. You know more often than not we cannot tell the difference between trash and treasure. That woman did not realize what she had in that jar of oil. She had underestimated or maybe just overlooked it. She thought the jar was insignificant, when in reality it was vitally significant.

Lately many of you know I have been having a problem with my hip, my right hip to be exact. I have been to an orthopedic surgeon who replaced my left hip in 2005 twice now, once for x-rays and consultation and once for

a hip injection to help alleviate the pain. But both times I went I was given a paper which had these stretching exercises which I am to do twice a day. I do them before I shower each morning, and again in the evening. I have another appointment this week to go over what the next step will be.

I mention this because back in 1971 the high school I attended began a new sport, wrestling. I began my career of wrestling November 1971 and wrestled until 1980. Before every practice and match wrestlers do stretching exercises. We did these stretching exercises to stretch our muscles, and ligaments so as not to pull anything during a match.

I along with many other wrestlers did these exercises half-heartedly just because we were expected to. I never really put much effort in doing most of them. A couple I really concentrated on, as a matter of fact at one point I was able to do a complete split I was so limber. But most of the stretching exercises were just for show. I did not believe those exercises were necessary then, maybe they weren't, but today I am paying the price. See those stretching exercises were necessary then, but I believe now they were also necessary for today. I believe my problem stems back to my lack of concentration on those exercises.

You may have what God needs right now and not even know it. You may think God cannot use what you have today, because you don't see yourself fully equipped. In our passage the woman says "*nothing but a jar of oil.*" The Hebrew word for jar is a word that literally means "flask." It wasn't a large bottle, but instead a small flask probably of anointing oil that would be used to anoint. That is very important because it tells us something else about this jar. This was not ordinary oil. This was holy oil. It was anointing oil that her husband probably would have used from time to time as he would minister in the name of the Lord.

Greater things are possible for you, right in the place where God has you positioned. Even if you fail to see it; even if you don't feel comfortable doing what is before you; even if you don't feel fully qualified. After all who of us is really ever fully qualified in anything?

The woman from our passage, she felt she had nothing to pay her taxes with, Elisha asked what she did have. Her reply was "*Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.*" What she saw as nothing God saw a more than enough. All God needed was all she had. Did you hear that? All God needed was all she had.

Jar upon jar was filled from that small jar of oil. God did not just meet her need, but He exceeded it. She ended up with more than enough. She could pay her bill and enough left over to live on. How did this miracle start? It started with something which seemed to amount to nothing. All this woman could focus on was what we usually focus on. We usually focus on what we don't have. Elisha on the other hand focused on what she did have. That's what we should do here at Landrum UMC; we should focus on what we do have. That's what each of us should do in our everyday lives; we should be focusing on what we do have rather than what we don't.

We often excuse ourselves from God's greater vision because we believe we don't have enough to accomplish God's greater vision. What will it take for each of us to fully realize and understand we do have enough once we give it all to God? One of Satan's greatest strategies is to get us to focus on what we don't have, or what we use to have, or what someone else has. He does this to keep us from looking in our own house and asking God, "What can you do through me with what I have?"

Too often we operate out of an "if ... then," mindset.

If we had ..., then we would ...

If we could ..., then we would ...

This mindset traps us in a lesser life; we end up spending a majority of our time daydreaming about what we wish we had, what we wish we could do, and little to no time investing in what we do have and what we can do. And we end up wishing away what never comes because we never use what we have and placing it in God's hands.

Churches don't do what they are called to do by dreaming about imaginary ministries. Churches don't grow by dreaming about imaginary buildings. Services don't become Spirit led by dreaming about imaginary services we would like to have. None of these will ever happen until we embrace our limitations; limitations that God could use well beyond our limitations. Thinking outside the box won't work until we start trusting; fully trusting God with all we have right now, today. We need to see our limitations as fish and loaves. God can only bless what we bring to Him. What do you have in your house? Nothing but this! The "this" is what God is seeking from each one of us? Question is will are we willing to give it all? You're greatest; our greatest limitation is God's greatest opportunity. Lord take what we have; take what I have and make it become overflowing.