**Sermon Title: Living On What You Have Left**

**Preacher: Rev. Crawford**

**2 Kings 4:1-7**

**September 3, 2023**

**Scripture**

**2 Kings 4:1-7**

*1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, there is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.*

**Sermon Summary**

Reflecting on the trials and tribulations faced by those most oppressed, Reverend Crawford references Langston Hughes’ Mother to Son poem, highlighting the famous line: ‘life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.’ It is a reminder that there will be seen and unseen challenges in life. But his mother doesn’t give up, even at the end of her ropes. “But all the time I’se been a-climbin’ on, and reachin’ landin’s, and turnin’ corners, and sometimes goin’ in the dark, where there ain’t been no light”. Hughes’ mother, along with countless other mothers, demonstrated great sacrifice and perseverance through life’s most difficult moments - faith makes things possible, but it doesn’t make it easy.

The woman in the passage is a widow and in debt, she is stripped of everything she has. She had to sell everything she owned and it still wasn’t enough to pay off her debts. She is now running the risk of losing her children to slavery. She’s being attacked on every side. In the midst of such adversity we ought to remember God’s word that tells us ‘be anxious for nothing, but in all things through prayer and supplication make your requests known to God’ Philippians 4:6.

The woman appeals to Elisha to help her. Her husband was a faithful student of his and she implores him to do something. Instead of providing the solution himself, he asks her what resources she has. It is a blessing to have people in our lives who can show us that we still have something left. Everything she thought was valuable was already sold, however, she overlooked the one jar of oil she still had and how it could be used in her desperate situation. We can give up, stop trying, and minimize the little we may have left is of any use. Don’t think something is so small that God can’t use it (i.e. faith, hope, resources, a dream).

**Elisha offers 3 instructions:**

1. **Trust in your community**. The widow was to borrow from all her neighbors and empty the vessels they gave her. It is important know when to ask for help; don’t let pride get in the way. You don’t have go through your struggles by yourself. At the same time, the community ought to be benevolent when members are in need. We need each other to survive.
2. **Trust in God’s provision.** The woman begins to pour her oil into the empty vessels. It seemed that the little oil she had wouldn’t be enough, but as she continued to pour, she discovered the abundance of God. Whenever we commit to God, He will commit to us. When you pour out what God has put in you, it begins to multiple. The importance of having empty vessels was so that the amount of oil poured into it would be commensurate to the size of the vessel. The more emptiness or space you offer God, the more God can move in our lives. She poured beyond what would have been required to pay off her debt.
3. **Trust in God’s abundance**. The woman was able to pay off her debts and then live off the rest of the oil she poured. We always have something inside of us that can be used to bless us and give glory to God. God can do a makeover with your left overs.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. Why didn’t Elisha confront the creditors, the oppressive system?
2. Are we willing to participate in our own blessings? If so, how do we participate?
3. Do you ever ask others for help? Why or why not?
4. How do you show radical hospitality?
5. How can the church grow in benevolence?
6. What little do you have left that maybe you are overlooking in pursuit of your blessing?