

A Gracious God Protecting His Righteous Remnant

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Preacher: Philip Copeland

[0 : 00] And we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. Phil Copeland is continuing our time in 2 Kings. So do grab your Bible and we're going to be reading from 2 Kings chapter 4.

We do have plenty of visitors' Bibles spread around at the auditorium, so do grab one and follow along. Phil will be preaching on this whole chapter of 2 Kings 4, but we're going to read just up to verse 37.

For now, so 2 Kings chapter 4, beginning then at verse 1.

Now, the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, Your servant, my husband, is dead. And you knew that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.

And Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house? And she said, Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.

[1 : 21] Then he said, Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few. Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels.

And when one is full, set it aside. So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured, they brought the vessels to her.

When the vessels were full, she said to her son, Bring me another vessel. And he said to her, There is not another. Then the oil stopped flowing.

She came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. And you and your sons can live on the rest.

One day, Elisha went on to Shunam, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food.

[2 : 23] And she said to her husband, Behold now, I knew that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.

One day he came there and he turned into the chamber and rested there. And he said to Gehazi, his servant, Call this Shunamite. When he had called her, she stood before him.

And he said to him, Say now to her, See, you have taken all this trouble for us. What is to be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?

She answered, I dwell among my own people. And he said, What then is to be done for her?

Gehazi answered, Well, she has no son and her husband is old.

He said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. And he said, At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son.

[3 : 38] And she said, No, my Lord, O man of God, do not lie to your servant. But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.

When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, Oh, my head, my head. The father said to his servant, Carry him to his mother.

And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat in her lap till noon. And then he died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out.

Then she called to her husband and said, Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again. And he said, Why will you go to him today?

It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. She said, All is well. Then she saddled the donkey and she said to her servant, Urge the animal on.

[4 : 51] Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi, his servant, Look, there is the Shunammite.

Run at once to meet her and say to her, Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child? And she answered, All is well.

And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet and Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, Leave her alone for she is in bitter distress and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.

Then she said, Did I ask my Lord for a son? Did I not say, Do not deceive me? He said to Gehazi, Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go.

If you meet anyone, do not greet him. And if anyone greets you, do not reply and lay my staff on the face of the child. Then the mother of the child said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.

[6 : 04] So he arose and followed her. Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore he returned to meet him and told him, The child has not awakened.

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. And so he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord.

Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm.

Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times and the child opened his eyes.

Then he summoned Gehazi and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, Pick up your son. She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground.

[7 : 14] And then she picked up her son and went out. Amen. This is God's word. Well, please have your Bibles open to 2 Kings 4.

That'll be most helpful. We are living in a world of darkness and death.

Where daily life is so often marked by difficulty and strife. There is a world that is under curse and headed for judgment.

Well, friends, in such a world, where is the only place you and I can turn to in order to find lasting shelter and refuge?

Well, 2 Kings 4 has the answer. In this section of Kings, all the account is really focused in upon the truly awesome ministry of the prophet Elisha.

[8 : 32] And we're going to read about some truly miraculous events that took place in ancient Israel. Events that, as the Lord's people today, should thrill our hearts and give us great strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

But friends, the author of Kings is so clear in his historical account of these events. Elisha never does any of these things, these incredible things, out of his own abilities, as though he was superhuman or somehow divine.

Now, Elisha is a faithful prophet, he's a good and godly man, he's a bold man. But it is very clear that the real power seen in his ministry belongs to the Lord alone.

The Lord God is the one through all these incidents and he's working through his powerful word through his servant, Elisha. And in 2 Kings 4, you could really read the whole chapter as though it was a series of fight scenes.

There's a lot of fighting in the Bible and this is a chapter of fight scenes where some sort of difficulty or problem, some ghastly, some maybe more everyday examples come up against the powerful word of the Lord.

[9 : 47] And in every single fight scene in this chapter, there is only one clear winner. The word of the Lord is able to deal with a substantial debt, a shocking death, a spoiled dinner, and starving disciples.

Before we jump into the chapter, let me just make two introductory comments before we launch into it. Firstly, I wonder if you noticed as Josh was reading through and maybe as you read through in the offering, all of the people that we read about in this chapter are members of God's true Israel. That is, they are members of the righteous remnant of faith. They are all real believers. They are the ones within Israel who have not bowed the knee to the idolatrous religion that was set up by the

state.

These are some of the people whom the Lord promised back in 1 Kings 19, some of the 7,000 people that he would protect and keep their hearts away from worshipping idols.

These people are faithful to the Lord. They have kept covenant with him. And I wonder if you noticed as the passage was being read out again that none of these people are mentioned by name.

[11:06] Did you notice that? They are all nameless. For at that time, none of these people had any real status and significance on the grand political level of the world's affairs.

These people are nothing in the world's eyes. But that does not matter when it comes to the Lord our God. Our God loves all of his chosen people without exception.

Every single one is precious to him. It doesn't matter what the world thinks. That is the kind of God that he is. The second introductory comment I want to say is that life for this remnant of faith, these nameless but precious souls in the Lord's eyes, life for them at that time in Israel would have been very, very difficult.

In the midst of a country, of a nation that is so spiritually sick and wicked, a nation that we know from the wider context of judges at that time was actually under covenant curse.

and headed for a grim end and judgment. Life was very hard for anyone who wanted to love the Lord and walk in his ways. Remember that as we go through the chapter, you'll bump into lots of little details that declare this to be so.

[12:27] So, I want us now to run through the chapter and we're going to look at the significance of what's going on in each scene. and then at the end, I'm going to really pull out the implication for our lives today, okay?

So, whilst there might not be application to all these points, please delay disinterest. Okay? You shouldn't be disinterested because this is the Word of God. But it is a hot room and it's a long chapter.

So, if you feel your neighbor drifting off, give them a holy and sanctified budge. Okay? Maybe don't do that if you don't know them. Okay? Okay, just to let you know. Anyway, four scenes, four fight scenes.

Scene number one, ready? Verses one to seven. The Word of the Lord deals with a substantial debt. So, verse one, we meet a grieving, desperate widow.

Here is a woman that should have been on the receiving end of much grace and compassion and care from the people of the Lord. For the Lord's law commanded His people to look after such as these.

[13:29] But it's not happening. All was not well in Israel at that time. She had been married to one of the sons of the prophets. The sons of the prophets.

They pop up a few times in Kings. They were a group of dedicated men who were dedicated to the Lord and His Word. And actually, if you read 1 Kings, you will see that a whole group of them had been executed, put to death at the command of Jezebel, the mother of the current king of Israel.

It would have been very, very hard to be part of this group. Did this widow's husband die in that way? We're not told. However he died, the poor man's wife is now left with a double bit of desperation.

Look at what she says in verse 1. She says to Elisha, Your servant, my husband, is dead. And you know that your servant feared the Lord. He was a real believer.

But the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves. So not only has she lost her dear husband by death, on top of that grief, she's going to lose her sons because she is a substantial debt and that on her own she cannot possibly pay.

[14:46] It's so steep. The only way it could be paid off was for her two sons to be taken off and sold into slavery. And they would then spend the rest of their lives working in order to pay the debt to the creditor.

And also friends, without the two sons in her life, this woman, this widow, was as good as dead. You see, back then it was vital for a woman to be under the protection of a man, whether it be a husband, a father, or a son.

Today we think that's absolutely outrageous because in our culture, women, obviously, as well as men, have access to education, professions, good jobs, and their own pensions, etc.

A woman without a husband, father, or son will flourish, can flourish in our culture, but not back then. A woman devoid of the protection of a man was in great peril. You might not like that, but friends, that's just how it was. And that is the future this widow is facing. She is utterly hopeless and helpless, facing a very slow demise if her sons are stripped from her. [15:54] And she's in pain. And she turns to the only one who can help her. She turns to the Lord via his prophet, the man of God.

You see, this widow is full of desperation, but it is faithful desperation. Faithful desperation. She doesn't cry out in bitter grumbling about the Lord, about how hard her life is, like Jehoram did when we looked at that passage last Sunday, when things didn't go his way.

No, she cries out desperately, but in faith to the Lord. And also, she doesn't try and suggest a solution to her problem. There's nothing manipulative about her.

She simply lays out her problem, knowing and trusting that God knows what to do. And he graciously hears her cry. Verse 2, Elisha asks her, what have you got in your house?

And she replies, nothing, but a tiny, little, wee bit of oil. And in verses 3 and 4, Elisha then tells her what to do with that tiny, wee bit of oil.

[17:05] And just know that what is about to happen is miraculous, but a key part of it unfolding is that the woman is required to walk by the obedience of faith.

This is something Josh picked up on this morning so helpfully. She is to get up and do what the word of the Lord tells her. So what did she have to do?

Well, Elisha tells her to go and borrow from her neighbors or whoever, from the local restaurants, wherever she could find them, as many pots, pans, buckets, tubs, bowls, jugs, jars, basins, any empty vessel she can get her hands on, as many as possible, take them back to her place, shut the doors, and then take the little wee supply of oil that she had and pour it into the empty vessels. And without hesitation, without any questioning, in verses 4 to 6, this widow faithfully does what the Lord says. And her sons join in too.

And what the Lord promised happens. She pours out the tiny wee bit of oil and it just keeps coming and coming more and more and more. Vessel after vessel is filled up until there is this huge amount of oil.

[18:22] In verse 7, the widow comes back to the man of God and tells him all about it and then he says, go, sell the oil and use the money to pay off your colossal debt and your sons and you can live on the rest.

the word of the Lord graciously saves the hopeless. It has the power to deal with a substantial debt. But more than that, the Lord is so generous, he provides this widow with so much more than she's even asked for.

For she's given funds to cover the cost of living for her and her sons, it seems, forever. to the rest of their days are over. By grace, the debt is settled, the future is secure.

Second fight scene, verses 8 to 37, and this is the big key chunk section within the passage. The word of the Lord deals with a shocking death.

A shocking death. So Elisha is on the move in verse 8. He passes through an area called Shunem. And we are told about a wealthy woman who lived there. Her life is easier than the widow, but we'll see in a moment she is not immune from the struggles and fragility and vulnerability of life.

[19:42] But anyway, this woman is there. She is another true Israelite, a real believer. She behaves in a very godly way. She uses her wealth to support the man of God and his ministry.

And she begins by inviting him in for a meal with her husband. And then, whenever Elisha comes back into town, we're not told how frequent that was, but it seems to be frequent, she continues to open up her house to him.

And in verses 9 and 10, look at that, she urges her husband to build an extension on top of their house, a loft conversion, and to install a fully furnished guest room for Elisha to stay in whenever he's in town.

And of course, that's the type of godly behavior the Lord Jesus goes on to commend in Matthew chapter 10 centuries later. She's a very faithful woman.

Now friends, we could actually spend a whole sermon, a whole Sunday evening thinking just about the lessons we can learn from her alone and her example. But anyway, Elisha wants to reward her for her kind provision.

[20 : 50] And in verse 13, he says to her, are you sure there is nothing that you want? What do you want? I could even put in a good word for you with the king or the captain of the army.

My friends, I might be wrong here. I might be wrong. But I just wonder if in verse 13, Elijah is gently testing this woman and her motives.

I might be wrong, but I just get that little impression. To be in favor with the idolatrous king of Israel and his commander at that time, to get a deal from them was not a good thing.

To do that would be to align yourself with the one who loved the idolatrous bull calves that stood in Bethel. If this is a test in verse 13, this woman passes with flying colors.

Doesn't she? She doesn't want anything to do with the wicked king of Israel. She doesn't want to increase her status. She does not want anything, any type of reward for what she has done for Elisha.

[21 : 57] And she says politely to the prophet, I have everything I need. I am right here in my own clan and community. That is, she is totally content with what the Lord has given her and where the Lord has placed her.

And she wants to get on with worshiping the Lord with all that she has. That seems to be reward enough for this woman. But the Lord is no man's debtor and he is a God who loves to generously give to his people.

And so Elisha doesn't let it go. And in verse 14, Elisha's servant is called Gehazi. Great name. If I was to ever have any more sons, I would call him Gehazi.

That's a great name. Doesn't sound that good in a Glasgow accent though. Gehazi. Anyway.

Gehazi informs Elisha of two facts of this woman.

Firstly, the woman has no son. Secondly, her husband is old. And so Elisha calls this woman to him, having heard all that, in verse 16 and says, at this season, in about a year's time, you shall embrace a son.

[23 : 11] And when you hear that, that should remind you if you know your Bibles of Genesis 18, where the exact same phrase is used of another impossible birth that's promised to Sarah and Abraham.

And back then, the Lord was true to his word in bringing them a son, even though they were well advanced in years. And in 2 Kings 4, the Lord does it again for this woman.

In verse 17, about a year later, she gave birth to a son, just as the word of the Lord had promised. Not only would that have brought her joy, but again, remember, having a son would also have brought her future security.

If her husband died, remember what we said earlier, at that time, a woman without a man was in peril, even if they were wealthy. But now this woman has a son, and she also has bright hope for tomorrow.

Or does she? Time passes. The son grows up. He's now a little boy. And the unthinkable happens. The unthinkable happens.

[24 : 21] Verses 18 to 20. One morning, he suddenly complains of a terrible headache to his daddy. And hours later, this precious wee son dies in his mother's arms, looking into his mother's face.

It's horrific. Shocking death. But friends, what would have made this all the more painful for that woman is the fact that this son was a gift of God's grace. And yet now he's dead.

He's been taken away suddenly. What's the Lord doing? Why has this happened? Do you know we're not told? We're not told at all.

God's grace can often feel so painful and perplexing. Well, in response to this, the godly woman does what all of the Lord's people must do when they're in such circumstances.

Even when we feel the Lord has crushed us and laid a heavy hand upon us. And that is, she turned to him. She turned to him. For although he has crushed her, the Lord still remains our only hope.

[25 : 36] And so she goes to his prophet. In verse 25, she hurries out to Elisha. The business about keeping secret between her husband and not revealing the boy is dead and all the secrecy that you read about in the account, it's all because she is fixated upon getting to the word of the Lord as quick as she can.

And so she travels 18 miles to Mount Carmel, not stopping at anything. And when she comes to Elisha in verse 27, she throws herself to the ground at his feet.

And Gehazi tries to pull her away. Stop bothering the prophet of the Lord. But she clings to the man of God. She's desperate. And notice Elisha's limitations here.

Notice Elisha's limitations. Here. Verse 27, look what he says. He says to Gehazi, Leave her alone. Let her weep. And let her speak to me.

For she's in bitter distress. And the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me. Elisha is limited here. Well, in verse 28, the grieving woman goes on to pour out her pain to him.

[26 : 48] Just like the widow did at the start of the chapter. And moved with compassion that is obviously compassion shared with the Lord himself. He takes action.

Verse 31, He promises in the name of the Lord he will not leave this woman. He will go with her to her son's dead body.

And we're left in suspense, actually. We're left in suspense. For the author again tells us about Elisha's limitations. Look at verse 31. Elisha tells his servant Gehazi to go on ahead of me and this woman and take my staff.

And when you get to the boy's body, go and lay the staff upon the boy's body. So Gehazi goes and does that. He lays Elisha's staff on the body. Nothing happens.

Nothing. Nothing. And you think, oh, what's going to happen? Verse 32, Elisha finally arrives. He goes into the room where the body is, shuts the door behind him.

[27 : 55] And again, I think the emphasis is upon Elisha's limitations. Elisha cannot command this boy to get up. He cannot speak the boy back to life.

Alone, Elisha is powerless for he's just a man. But the word of the Lord can deal with anything, friends. And so Elisha prays.

He prays. He intercedes for the suffering woman to the Lord. And he's kept waiting yet more suspense. And his actions in verse 34 to 35, my wife and I were reading this passage earlier on in the week.

We were looking at them and we both said, what is all that about? I don't have a clue. The lying down on the body, the stretching out upon him, the lips on the lips. I don't have a clue.

Let me tell you, if anyone comes to you saying, oh, I know why I did that, they are lying. It is mysterious. We are not told what he's doing here. This is mysterious. But again, I think the emphasis is upon Elisha's limitations.

[29 : 03] But eventually, verse 35, never before has the sound of a child sneezing been so joyful. Verse 35, the boy who was stone cold dead sneezes and then he's alive.

He's restored to life. He was dead. He's now alive. The Lord graciously heard his servant's prayer by grace.

The word of the Lord raised this wee boy from the dead. In verse 37, he's reunited with his mother. What a joy that must have been for her, to fill her heart with joy.

Third fight scene, verse 38 to 41, the word of the Lord deals with a spoiled dinner. In verse 38, Elisha now is in an area called Gilgal.

There's two areas called Gilgal back then. I can't be sure which one, but what we are certain of is there was a famine in the land. And when you hear that, immediately, you can't help but think back to the law, the Deuteronomy.

[30 : 12] Where the Lord promised that if his people broke covenant with him, they would come under curse. And one of those curses for their covenantal infidelity, for their unbelief, was famine.

And here in verse 38, it's not stated explicitly, but given the context, all was not well in Israel, it seems more than likely this famine was a sign that the land is under curse.

Now just notice, please, here in this scene, the Lord's faithful people are also caught up in this famine. They are caught up in the effects of the curse.

They are not immune from God's discipline over the land. And verse 43, he says that there were actually a hundred of these faithful men, these sons of the prophets, sitting alongside Elisha.

It's not just one or two, like I used to think, but the text tells us there was a hundred of them there. Finding food in a time of famine would have been very painful. And once it was cooked, they would not dare waste a morsel.

[31 : 21] In such circumstances, it would have been tragic when food was ruined or made harmful. But that's what happens. Verse 38, Elisha asks for a large pot of stew to be prepared and put on for everyone.

Verse 39, one of the group goes out to gather herbs. One of the sons of the prophets goes out with the best of intentions and he spots a wild vine and on the wild vine is wild vegetables and he looks at them and thinks they were good.

The Hebrew word translated gourds in our translation was really, it stood for a vegetable that was like a squash, like a butternut squash, but not quite. It was halfway between a butternut squash and a melon, if you can picture such a thing.

Too many of these things in your dinner and you were a goner. But he sees them and he thinks, oh, they look good, they could beef up our stew. Takes them back to the pot, chops them up, chucks them in, think, great, I've done a great thing for these people.

He was well meaning, but he has completely spoiled this crucial meal with a deadly ingredient. If consumed too much of it, you would be really ill and die.

[32 : 34] And in verse 40, the stew is served up. And when some of the men take their first tastes of it, you can imagine them spitting this stuff out and immediately they cry in alarm to Elisha, oh, man of God, there is death in the pot.

Here again, the remnant of faith cry out to the Lord's prophet for help. Like the widow, like the woman, they turn to the word of the Lord in their distress.

And without panic, without any hint of drama, Elisha takes action, verse 41. And what he does here in verse 41 is very similar to his actions back in Jericho in 2 Kings 2.

Remember, Jericho's water supply was under curse at that time. It was spoiled. It was deeply harmful. You would die if you consumed it, probably. And until Elisha comes along, and people cried out to him, and they cried out to him in faith for deliverance, and Elisha takes a bowl of salt. I was going to bring up a salt shaker with me, but I thought that would be too distracting for me as much as it is for you. And he takes the bowl of salt, and he goes up to the water of Jericho that's under curse, and he tosses some salt in, and he says these words, Thus says the Lord, I have healed your water.

[33 : 51] And in an instant, the word of the Lord carried out a great transformation. The word of the Lord took what was cursed, and spoiled, and full of death, and made it new, and healthy, a place of blessing.

And Elisha carries out the same action here in this chapter, but now he uses flour in verse 41. He takes some of the flour, and he tosses it into the stew.

And remember, there was no power in the flour. There's no power in the flour. No way. But this was a sign. It was another sign, just like the salt in Jericho, that this is the Lord doing this.

And the Lord transforms it. By His grace, the Lord has overruled this genuine mistake made by His well-meaning disciple. There's no drama. There's no discipline.

The Lord's not a big disciplinarian who loves to beat His people up when they make a genuine mistake. He is gracious. And the Lord even overrules this mistake to bring glory to His name.

[34 : 59] And what was cursed, and spoiled, and full of death, was transformed into a thing of blessing and beauty. Fourth fight scene, verse 42 to 44, the Word of the Lord deals with starving disciples.

Very similar to what we've just seen. This is another occasion. Take it, we're still in Gilgal, and Elisha and the sons of the prophets are still sitting together. The famine is still raging on.

The food is still sparse and precious. And please look at verse 42. A man came from Baal, Shalisha, bringing the man of God, bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain in his sack.

And here's another faithful member of Israel, faithful member of the remnant. Back in Deuteronomy 18, the Lord commanded His people, at harvest time, when you have the firstfruits just before harvest, take your firstfruits and give them as an offering to the priests.

And that is what this man is doing in verse 42. Even in this time of famine, even when it was so costly, he sacrificially brings his offering of firstfruits.

[36 : 19] But notice, not to the priests. No. Why? Because again, all was not well in Israel. The current priesthood in the land were false priesthood.

It was a false priesthood set up for the worship of idols. This man, in verse 42, wants nothing to do with that. Instead, he brings his firstfruits to the real man of God.

For the Word of God is really with him. This is a man of faith here. And he gives Elisha twenty loaves and some ears of corn. And Elisha says to his servant, really casually, serve all this food out

to the men.

And the servant says, there's a hundred of us here. There's no way this will stretch that far. And Elisha simply repeats his instruction, no, serve this small amount of food to the men.

For, thus says the Lord, they shall eat and they shall have some left. And so the little amount of food is set before these hundred hungry men.

[37 : 28] And they eat, they eat and eat and eat. And the food just keeps coming out of this little supply, more and more until everyone is full.

And they have some left over. The Word of the Lord again proves totally trustworthy and generous. The Word of the Lord deals with these starving disciples.

Now friends, there is so much that could be learned from this chapter from 2 Kings 4, but let me draw out the main implication as we finish today.

We obviously don't live in ancient Israel, but the world we live in, friends, has not really changed.

Not really. The days we are living in are very similar to the days described in Kings.

Life is dark, the world is full of difficulty and distress, suffering and hardship. People today like to act as though they're not vulnerable and weak and fragile.

[38 : 32] The truth is we really are. People like to make believe that that's not the case. You should have heard some of the most deluded things I've ever heard in my life about human capabilities in the face of death.

I've heard them over the past couple of years as I've waited in waiting rooms at the Beatesen waiting for cancer treatment. We are vulnerable and fragile and of course just like back then death is never very far away from any of us.

In fact death stalks every one of us all constantly. Every day. And we live in a world like this because the world is under curse.

curse of our sin. The sin of our hearts. The world isn't the way it should be because our hearts are not the way that they should be. And the Bible tells us that the world is headed for a day of final reckoning.

A day of judgment far greater than the exile that would be experienced by Israel. And friends, the Bible also teaches us that on our own every one of us is in even more danger than the poor widow that we read of here.

[39 : 46] On our own we are all in an even more helpless state and there's nothing we can do to save ourselves because we are all in an insurmountable debt before our maker because of our sin against him.

The debt of our sin of living as though we ourselves are the center of our own lives is something that if we were to try and pay back we'd spend the whole of eternity paying it off.

In other words, the cost of our sin, the debt that we owe our maker is infinite. Where is the only place we can turn to in order to find deliverance and lasting refuge and shelter?

And the answer is you must turn to the greater prophet of the Lord, the man of God par excellence, the one who came centuries after Elisha, the one who himself is the word of God made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who came and did even greater works than Elisha, the one who raised the widow's son from the dead.

We read about it in Luke chapter 7, read it later when you go home, it took place in a place called Nain, just up the road from Shunam.

[41 : 07] And unlike Elisha, with all of his limitations and all of his strange acts, all that the Lord Jesus would do was walk up to this dead boy's body and say, get up little boy, get up.

And like that, the wee boy was raised alive again and the funeral was cancelled. The Lord Jesus also fed a crowd of not just a hundred hungry men but over 5,000.

Luke tells us that 5,000 was the number of the men but there was others there as well, it was over 5,000. And he fed them with just 5 loaves and 2 fishes. And Jesus miraculously fed these people.

They gathered round to eat and more and more food came out and they had an abundance of leftovers. And friend, if you turn to this Jesus, crying to him in faith, then you will find him to be none other than the Lord God himself incarnate, the Lord God we read of in 2 Kings 4.

And under his rule you will come to know and experience all of the beautiful blessings from his hand that are laid out in this chapter. The insurmountable debt of your sin will be gone, paid for, be paid for fully with the precious blood that he shed on the cross.

[42 : 28] And more than that, he will provide for your daily needs, for he is a God who delights to give good things to his people. And in him you will find that your future is secure.

Not even death can separate you from him and his love, for Jesus has defeated it at his resurrection. And if you turn to him in faith, you will experience the beautiful and the incomparable peace that comes from knowing that when he returns in glory, you too will be raised with him in power, along with the rest of his faithful remnant.

And on that day when Jesus appears, just by the words of his mouth, he will make the whole cosmos new again, removing all of the curse from it, removing every trace of evil that has currently spoiled the created order.

The Lord Jesus will transform it from that dire, horrible world of darkness to a glorious kingdom of health and blessing to be enjoyed forever and ever.

it will be as easy for the Lord Jesus to do that as it was easy for Elisha to toss that flower into the stew. That's how powerful he is. No more suffering and sorrow.

[43 : 47] Bitterness and pain will be gone. The world will be a perfect paradise of beauty and blessing for us all. And the faithful remnant, those who've clung on to Jesus, even in days of great difficulty and despair, will feast with him bountifully at his table.

Friends, 2 Kings 4 gives us a glorious glimpse of the man of God and his kingdom that is yet to come. And 2 Kings 4 also shows us that the Lord will continue to care and to protect for all those who trust in him in the here and now.

As we continue to struggle and battle and slog on through the paths of righteousness in the present age. If you're a Christian here this evening, then please know that 2 Kings 4 says to you, the next time life smashes you in the face, your first instinct must be to turn to him.

Cry to him. to lay out all your problems before him. Do that immediately, without delay. Sometimes you hear of a Christian, and I'm sure I've done this, reflecting on a difficult time, and they're accounting of what's happened to them, and they say this line, I know I've said it, they say this line, all I could do was pray.

In other words, all the other options that I tried to fix this situation disappeared, and all I could do was pray. And 2 Kings 4 says, that's where you should start, in your calamity. Prayer is not some sort of a second option.

[45 : 32] Turn to him right away, the God who loves you. He is ready and willing to help us with all of our calamities. Well, let's pray.

gracious God, we are so thankful for you.

We pray that when darkness and difficulty sweep over our lives, we will turn to no one else but you. may we always turn to you through your precious Son and the power of your blessed Spirit, Holy Trinity.

May we trust in you to give us the help and the provision that we need each day. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.