Every Good Gift - Part 2

Created with a Need

## (2 Kings 4:1-7)

Welcome all of you to Christ’s Community Church and those of you watching online, thank you for joining us today. This is part two of our message series Every Good Gift and we have been talking about being thankful for our blessings. Last week we saw that there are some things that come from God that we may never have even considered as a blessing before. That God can bless us with something that causes us to cry out to him, something that causes us to earnestly seek him, to reach out for him, and which ultimately causes us to be blessed in ways that we never would’ve asked or even imagined.

Now, the backdrop behind this theme of blessings from heaven, is the important topic of miracles, because we believe in a miracle working God. We love and serve a God who speaks and it is done. Not just that he did miracles long ago, but that he still does miracles among us today, and so we believe in a God that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And yet the word “miracle” has lost some of its power in our culture today, because it’s often wrongly used.

You know, it’s like if you’re hungry and you’re making a sandwich, and so you may grab a jar of Miracle Whip, but it’s not a miracle, it’s a preference or a convenience. Or maybe you pull into the parking lot at your favorite store on Black Friday and finding a parking spot right in front. It’s not a miracle, it’s just that somebody happened to leave the store at the exact time as you were pulling in.

You see, a miracle, according to Merriam-Webster, is “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.” In other words, it’s an extraordinary or astonishing occurrence when God intervenes in your situation, when the natural is interrupted by the supernatural, and as our theme Scripture reminds us,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

And so, a miracle is an exceptional or extremely unusual event, situation, or accomplishment which comes from above, its source is from heaven, and it’s coming down from God, our Father who created all the lights in the heavens saying, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:3).

This was the kind of occurrence that we read about last week in second Kings, chapter twenty, with King Hezekiah. It never would’ve happened, it couldn’t have happened, unless God stepped in, and he did. We saw divine supernatural miracles of healing, deliverance from enemies, and nature interrupted as the shadow moved back on the steps, not lengthening as the day progressed, but reversing its direction and moving backwards.

As we continue today in part two, this message is entitled, Created with a Need, and I want to show you an amazing miracle of provision. Reading from second Kings, chapter 4, beginning at verse one, we meet a widow who is in great need, she’s desperate, and she cries out to the prophet Elisha,

“Your servant, my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves” (2 Kings 4:1).

And so, as we’re introduced to this story, we find a widow who has a great financial need, she has a debt that she cannot pay, and her creditor was coming for collection.

Now, since she had no way of paying him back, as was customary in that culture, his intention was to take her two sons as slaves. And so, she has a very real and significant need and God is about to miraculously transform her entire situation. “Elisha replied to her,” in verse two asking,

"How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" (2 Kings 4:2).

And I love that question because all through the Scriptures, wherever you find a story of need, you also discover a miracle of provision. In other words, Elisha is looking for the ingredients for her miracle. She replied to Elisha,

"Your servant has nothing there at all… except a little oil" (2 Kings 4:2).

In other words, she was desperate and without hope, because all this widow could see was what she didn’t have, but Elisha was about to show her that she had everything she needed for a miracle.

We see this time and time again in Scriptures and in our own lives, when we don’t have what we need, it’s then that we discover that God is all that we really need. And so, the Lord is preparing a table before this widow, and Elisha’s gathering the ingredients for her miracle. It’s just as the Bible says in Philippians chapter 4, verse 19,

“My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

You see, my God will meet you in that place of scarcity, he will provide for you when your heart is set on him.

James tells us, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father…” (James 1:17).

In other words, it’s coming down, just like Jacob had a vision of a ladder coming down from heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. He recognized that God comes down to be with us, just like God provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness, protecting them and leading them by a “pillar of cloud by day” and a “pillar of fire at night” (Exodus 13:22). And so, he’s coming down; God will meet all your needs, in the tent in the wilderness, in the temple and in the holy of holies, he comes down to be with his people to meet their needs.

Jesus Christ, the son of God is born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, perfect in every way, fulfilling prophecy, saving us, and meeting our greatest need, the forgiveness of our sins. Throughout history, whether it’s bread from heaven, water from a rock, a serpent on a pole, or our Savior on a cross, over and over and over, in every story of need there is a miracle of God’s provision. The promise of God is that when he is the one guiding you, even if everything around you is barren, he will satisfy your needs with his miraculous provision. The Bible says,

“The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58:11).

The problem is that as we consider our own situation, our own needs and desires, that we often misinterpret what we are expecting God to do.

You see, the Lord promises to guide you, but there are prerequisites to receiving his guidance, because he can only guide those who are willing to be guided. In other words, you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t do what? You can’t make it drink, right? And so, we’ve got to be in sync with the Spirit of God, we’ve got to be willing to walk in faith and in obedience. And so, watch this, Elisha said to the widow,

“Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars and as each is filled put it to one side" (2 Kings 4:3-4).

Now, that’s a very strange command, but that’s where faith comes into play, because God can only guide those who are willing to be guided, willing to step out in faith. It’s just like God said to Moses, “Throw down your staff”. To Naaman, “Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan.” Or as Jesus said to the invalid, “Pick up your mat and walk.” To the widow, the prophet Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars.” It didn’t make any sense, but he was setting the stage for the miracle working power of God to supernaturally meet her needs.

Elisha asked her, “What do you have?” And she replied, “Nothing… except this little jar of oil.” And isn’t that so much like us, when all we can see, all we can think about, is what we don’t have? And so, what we have may seem as nothing to us, but we’ve got to trust that God has given us everything we need to do what he wants us to do.

This poor widow says she has nothing, but Elisha is about to show her that she just needed to start working with what she had. And so, the widow has a great need, she has this little jar of oil, and the Bible says,

“She left (Elijah) and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons” (2 Kings 4:5).

“They brought the jars to her” and as long as her sons brought jars to her “she kept pouring” (2 Kings 4:5).

I believe God is calling us as a church into a place of deeper faith and greater stewardship, a faith that begins to pour out what little we have.

Some of you were with us from the beginning, some of you know that this church began meeting in a room the size of a two-car garage, and you know that we serve a God who can do a lot with a little. Today we’re in a 7,000 square-foot building, we’re utilizing the space the best we can, working with what we’ve got, taking that little bit of oil, and pouring and pouring and pouring, knowing that what God provides he multiplies.

This widow had a great need and God invited her to be a part of the miracle, he simply asked her to pour out what she had, and the moment she began to move, pouring out what she had, God began to miraculously multiply it.

“When all the jars were full,” the Bible says in verse six, “she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left” (2 Kings 4:6).

And as long as there was an empty jar, God would fill it, but when there were no more jars, the Bible says, “The oil stopped flowing” (2 Kings 4:6).

This widow experienced a great miracle of God’s provision. She had a great need, but in faith she gave what little she had, and God provided everything she needed. Elisha told her in verse seven,

“Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left” (2 Kings 4:7).

I want you to know that we serve a God who specializes in doing a lot with a little. In 2012, when Christ’s Community Church first began meeting in Emmitsburg, we didn’t have much to offer, but we began serving this community, we came week after week and poured out what we had. And I believe this is so important, because as we demonstrated our faith, we actually became part of the miracle, and we got to see God’s faithfulness as he multiplied what we poured out.

The spiritual principle behind this is rather profound, because the Bible tells us in second Corinthians that,

“We ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God and not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT).

And so, you and I are like those jars, and what God has done in the past he can do again. As you and I continue pouring out, God is multiplying our resources, making it clear that this great power is from God and not from ourselves. As we continue to give, pouring out our love as we serve this community, letting God’s light shine in our hearts, the oil continues to flow. As this next generation, our sons and daughters bring us more empty jars, the oil continues to flow as God miraculously multiplies what’s given in faith.

Today if you’re here and you’re a follower of Jesus Christ, you’re not only a member of the family of God, but you’re part of the miracle being poured out, because God created you to be an active part of his family. And the truth is that God has created every single one of us to be dependent, to need him and to need each other. In fact, the Bible says it this way in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 19, reading from the New Living Translation,

“You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19-22, NLT).

And so, in this passage, we discover that not only did God create us to be dependent on him and dependent on each other, but he made us family. We are carefully joined together in him, dependent on one another, having become a spiritual house built on the foundation of his word, with the cornerstone being Jesus Christ himself.

That’s the model, the standard that God has set before us, something that he created long ago, because his plan for the church is actually preparing us for the glory of his coming kingdom. And yet there are some of us who are pushing away from the table, who make it our goal to be independent, because we don’t want to need anybody. Some of us don’t want to be distracted by others, don’t want to be interrupted by neighbors, just wanting to be self-reliant, and yet God created you to be dependent on others. In fact, “The Lord said” in Genesis chapter 2,

“It is not good for the man to be alone...” (Genesis 2:18).

And so, of all that God created, he said that everything was good, except for this one thing, and that was that you and I should be alone.

Now, I know there are many reasons why people want to be alone in our culture today. People have let us down, we’ve been hurt by others time and time again, and so naturally we’re fearful, cautious, and insecure, but none of this was God’s intention when he created you. In fact, he has redeemed us from all that, he has delivered us from that, and I know that there are introverts and extroverts, loners and social butterflies, but God created all of us to need him and to need other people.

The Bible says, one time a man came to Jesus asking, of all the commands of God, which was most important. Jesus replied in Matthew chapter 22 saying,

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:36-37).

In other words, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God, needing him as your Heavenly Father, depending on him and being relationally connected to him. To love nothing in comparison to him, wanting only to please and glorify him, and exerting all the power of your body, your soul, and your mind to know him and serve him. And so, this is the desire of your creator, this he said is “the first and greatest commandment,” to only pursue things in reference to God, so that we would be dependent upon him, and that we would be in constant communion with him (Matthew 22:38).

And then Jesus said, “The second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

And so, it is this love for your neighbor which springs from the love of God as its source. Therefore, the need to be dependent on God and dependent on one another is found in the love of God in principle, pattern, and end.

God created us with this need that is best fulfilled in the body of Christ, the local church, doing life together with Jesus, connected together with other believers as a spiritual family. And it’s a gift as we open his word together, gathering together, and celebrating with those who are celebrating, hurting with those who are hurting, and being committed as a functioning part of the family of God, that we are fulfilling his purpose for us as believers.

God created us with a need, creating us to be dependent upon his provision, and he invites us today to be part of the miracle. Just as he miraculously provided for the widow, paid her debt to her debtor, multiplying what she poured out so that she and her sons could live on what he had provided. In the same way, God gave his one and only Son to pay our debt so that we could live on what he had provided. Jesus said,

“It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world…I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:32-33, 35).

Every good and perfect gift is from above. Jesus is the bread that came down from heaven, we need him, and without him we can do nothing. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Christ (John 15:4). And so, today, we are the children of God, we have a shared relationship with Christ as he said in Matthew chapter 18,

“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

And I know that’s taken out of context, but I’m using it loosely, because the principle remains the same, we’re in this together, we need one another, and we need Christ.

It’s not good that anyone be alone, God created us to be dependent on him and dependent on his people. That’s why the Bible says,

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

God wants us to come together as the family of God, not just coming to church, but being the church, because we are the body of Christ.

“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others…” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

As we seek God’s will, his provision will follow, because when God guides, he miraculously provides. And so, it’s as we pour out of these jars of clay that God multiplies, and that may be the most exciting thing of all, because as you give you might be part of God’s miraculous provision. You might be the answer to someone else’s prayer. In fact, this is what Paul told the church in second Corinthians, chapter 9, he said,

“You will be made rich in every way.”

Now why did he say that? So that you can have more and more for yourself? No, he said, “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:11).

In other words, when God uses what he has entrusted to you to be a blessing or an answered prayer to someone else, you become part of the miracle. And so, when you give in the church and through the church, someone might thank God because they walked in and felt the very real presence of God and their life was completely changed. Someone might thank God because of our ministry in the community. Or someone might thank God because of the missionaries that we support in Romania or Argentina. I don’t know how God might use you, but when you give in the church and through the church, you become part of God’s miraculous provision, and someone will thank God because of your faithfulness.

Today, there may be some of you wondering, “What if I don’t have enough?” And I want to remind you that wherever there is a need in Scripture, our God miraculously provides. And so, the question you need to ask yourself is, “Are you willing to give obediently in faith and trust God to multiply what you’ve poured out?” You know, “Are you believing God for big things, collecting lots of jars so that the oil keeps flowing, or are you limiting what God is trying to do through you?”

The bottom line is that it is fear that asks, “What if I don’t have enough? What if I run out? What if I can’t make a difference?” But it’s faith that asks, “What do I have to give?” And there is a big difference between fear and faith.

Fear tells you that you can’t afford to tithe, but faith recognizes that 90% with God’s blessing goes a whole lot farther than 100% without God’s blessing. Fear says, I don’t have enough, but faith says, my God is more than enough. And so, you believe it and become part of the miracle. If you are in need, you remember the Scripture as Paul said,

“My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

As we close, I pray that you realize how blessed you are and that you’re not just living for yourself, but you’re living for him and for others. You are blessed to be a blessing, because God is your provider and he is more than enough. You’re able to live for the glory of God and serve others, recognizing that God will do more in you and through you than you could ever even ask, think, or imagine.

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November 14, 2021

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*