

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

2 KINGS 4

⁴²A man came from Baal Shalishah and brought the man of God some bread from the first ripe grain, twenty loaves of barley bread, and some new grain in his sack. Elisha said, “Set it before the people so that they can eat.” ⁴³His attendant said, “How can I set this before one hundred men?” But he said, “Set it before the people so that they may eat, for this is what the LORD says: They will eat and have some left over.” ⁴⁴So he set it before them. They ate, and they had some left over, just as the LORD had said.



Before there was the feeding of the 4,000 and of the 5,000, there was Elisha’s feeding of the 100. Before Jesus of Nazareth multiplied bread for thousands on more than one different occasion; before He distributed His body and blood to the whole Church throughout the New Testament; there was an Old Testament appetizer miracle. The story of Elisha is one of multiplied ministry, an appetizer of the Christ.

THE LORD PROVIDES AN OLD TESTAMENT APPETIZER FOR THE MIRACLES OF MULTIPLIED FOOD

1. Meager amounts are enough

His predecessor was Elijah, yet the Bible has Elisha performing double the miracles Elijah performed. He had been given a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and he even was allowed to raise two people from the dead, compared to Elijah’s one. Elisha taught the Word of the Lord during the second half of the 9th century B.C., when the kingdom was divided. He was a teacher of the school of prophets, and there was a famine in the land leading up to this event.

A man brought to the Lord “new” grain and twenty loaves of bread. These are also called “firstfruits.” The Lord had commanded the Hebrews in the book of Exodus to “*bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest ... the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath*” during Passover week. This was the festival of the firstfruits. The Hebrews were to return the first reapings of harvest to the Lord. This recognized that the entire harvest was a gift from God. This also showed trust that the Lord would add much more to their abundance.

A loaf of barley bread is particularly small. It’s about the size of a thick pancake or maybe a squashed dinner roll. Twenty loaves like this seemed to fit in the skirts of this man’s robe. They would not come close to feeding 100 hungry prophets-in-training. So Elisha was looking to serve the Lord with a scarcity of resources.

Haven’t we all faced the same thing?

- A young man and woman fall in love and are convinced they should be married, but they don’t think they can afford it.
- A young married couple rightly expects children, but they don’t think they can pay for them.
- A young family considers sending their children to a private school where they will be taught God’s holy Word, but the cost seems prohibitive.
- A Christian’s conscience suggests that he ought to give more freely to his congregation, but that seems impossible to him.

So have you ever wondered how you were going to come up with the necessary resources? Chances are that most have. The next time that happens, follow the example of Elisha. Trust the Lord, true to His promise, to provide. After all, the Holy Spirit inspired David to write, “*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread*” (Psa. 37:25). Jesus added, “*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they*” (Matt. 6:26)?

Even if we cannot always recognize it in our material needs, we have more than enough in Christ about our spiritual wants and needs. In Christ we have:

- more than enough righteousness to transport us to glory,
- more than enough forgiveness to erase our sins completely
- and more than enough love to last an eternity.

“*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full*” (John 10:10).

2. Leftovers according to the Word

It was an astounding miracle. Normally, breaking bread means the pieces get smaller as you go, but, as 100 hungry prophets-in-training broke away at the bread, the 20 barley loaves just never ran out. The seminarians were satisfied. The fellas were full. There were leftovers on top of it. Plus this all happened *“just as the Lord had said,”* or otherwise translated, *“according to the Word of the Lord”* (v44).

When the Lord makes a promise, you can count on it to be fulfilled. The Lord’s power and love were sufficient for His people then. His power and love would be sufficient for an exponentially greater feeding in the time of Jesus. We present-day Christians must draw the same conclusion from this account.

Over seven billion people currently inhabit the earth. Each eats, on average, two or three times a day. Granted, sin does force some to go hungry, but sufficient food is available. So to this day Christ serves somewhere between 14 and 21 billion meals daily. How does He do it? Photosynthesis produces grains and fruits and vegetables that feed the animals, and those all in turn feed people.

Just think of a country where one-third of the adult population are considered overweight, where clothing is not only sufficient, but a fashion statement. Just imagine a land where homes have about three rooms per person, and they are filled with washers and dryers, ovens and microwaves, refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, tubs and showers, and all manner of heating and air conditioning.

That’s our land. We have an abundance of righteousness and peace in Christ. Yet this abundance from Christ makes us bold to trust in Him always to provide for our every need. It makes us courageous and generous as we provide for others. We Christians share our resources, because we know the eternal wealth from which they proceed and see the many needs Christ intends for us to fulfill. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we also find it easy to believe that a delicious eternal banquet awaits us in glory.

Just as Christ shared so selflessly, as Elisha did, let us be generous to others. If we are good at multiplying the food in our stomachs, and we are eating to a fault—that is, eating too much food—can we buy less and share more? If we are throwing out clothes, can we accumulate less and give away more? If we are living like royalty, better than kings in past times, let us not spend every last

penny on ourselves. Let's spend our leftovers according to the Word of kindness and generous, cheerful giving.

Furthermore, what will we do when we have the chance to feed others with the forgiveness of sins? When others need the clothing of Christ's righteousness, which so richly arrays our souls, we will provide the same for them. When others need our Savior's loving shelter from life's storms, we will support the preaching and teaching of Christ's Word with our gifts.

The real meal of the Messiah was yet to come, but Elisha gave us an Old Testament hint. God's people still need to feed on the Word, too. Let the death and resurrection of a friend; let every marriage of a man and wife; and let every touchpoint to the good news mean multiplied ministry—for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.