

1. We are going to finish our series today taken from the book of 2 Kings chapters 6 & 7.
2. The army of Aram has surrounded the city of Samaria, in order to cut it off from the outside world so that the people inside the city will surrender in defeat.
3. As a result of this siege there is a severe famine. People are beyond starving.
4. The desperation of the famine causes them to do irrational things out of desperation.
5. As a result of seeing this desperation, the king becomes angry. Then he starts looking for someone to blame and lands on the prophet Elisha.
6. Eventually the king blames God. God. This is your fault and I'm tired of waiting on you.
7. But the fact that the king and the people were tired didn't mean that the Lord was tired.
8. In chapter 7 verse 1 Elisha promises that God will do a great miracle. but the king's officer doubts that God will do anything because he can't wrap his mind around how God could do that.
9. We are reminded that the who, what, when, where, and how is not our concern. Because God rarely shares those details with us.
10. Instead he asks us to trust him that whoever, whatever, whenever, wherever, and however will be exactly what we need.
11. Last week we said that because God rarely shares all those details with us, our tendency is to view things as being out of control.
12. In fact, many things of life are out of our control. But the good news is that nothing is out of God's control.
13. Even while the officer is doubting and declaring that God can't do anything, the reality is outside the walls, God has already done everything the people of Samaria need.
14. The Lord had caused the army of Aram to hear what they thought were the sounds of enemy armies bearing down on them, and because of their great fear, they ran away leaving everything, food, clothing,

shelter, weapons, animals right in their spot so that the people of the city could come out and have everything they had lost restored.

15. So last week I left you with a great word of encouragement. God's got this.
16. Many things may be out of our control, but nothing is outside of God's control.
17. And because God has got everything under control, we don't have to wallow in fear and worry and anxiety. We can trust that God has got not only our future, but our best interests at heart.
18. And if God has got our future and our best interests under control; we can then be freed up to carry out the business and the calling God has placed on every believer.
19. The calling to be a disciple and make disciples.
20. The calling to reveal a loving God by serving others.
21. The calling to seek and save those who are lost so that no one is left behind. (Pause)
22. Before I flow into my next thought, I want to be sure that we all understand that I am not saying we should never rest or take a break.
23. I am not saying that we should avoid replenishing our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits when we find ourselves worn out and weary from the struggles of life.
24. Rest is a wonderful gift from the Lord that all of us need to practice on not only a daily basis but a weekly basis.
25. With that in mind however, as weak, frail human beings there is this tendency that is present in almost all of us.
26. And the tendency is...when faced hardship, trial, difficulty and pain, our tendency is to lay down the callings and the giftings we have been given, just for a time, while we focus on ourselves and making sure we are ok.
27. Again, to be clear. We should take care of ourselves. It's called stewardship of the physical, spiritual, and emotional resources God has given us.

28. But ceasing or pausing being a vessel the Lord flows through, to minister and reach out to others, is actually not part of the solution, it can be part of the problem.

TEXT: 2 Kings 7:3-11 Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, "Why stay here until we die? 4 If we say, 'We'll go into the city'--the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die." 5 At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, 6 for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" 7 So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. 8 The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also. 9 Then they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." 10 So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, "We went into the Aramean camp and no one was there--not a sound of anyone--only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were." 11 The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace.

TITLE: Keep Living.

INTRO:

1. So, the Lord does this great miracle. the Aramean army hears false sounds that scare them to death, so they run in fear leaving everything they had behind.
2. But as I said last week, the people of the city have no idea that God has already delivered and provided for them.
3. So, verse 3 tells us there were 4 lepers who were at the city gate.
4. They discuss among themselves, well if we go into the city we will die.
5. If we go over to the Aramean camp and surrender, we may die.
6. Or they may spare our lives and let us live. So, they took the chance to go to the Arameans.
7. But when they got there, they couldn't believe what they were seeing and hearing.

8. What they heard was nothing. Not a sound.
9. And what they saw was a camp that had been abandoned leaving for them more food, clothing, and shelter than they had ever seen in their lives.
10. There were probably tens of thousands of soldiers living in the camp just a short time before, so what they saw seemed like winning, the lottery if you will. Everything they ever wanted was right before their eyes.
11. So, the 4 lepers start rummaging through tents. They ate and drank until they were more than full.
12. Then each of them take all the silver, gold, and clothes they could carry to a safe place and hid them for later.
13. Then they came back and entered other tents and did the same thing. Carrying off and hiding everything they could carry.
14. When they came back the third time however, and started to pillage still other tents, these 4 lepers came to a very sobering conclusion.
15. **2 Kings 7:9** Then they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace."
16. What we are doing is not right.
17. They were experiencing siege, famine, desperation just like everyone else; and in just a moment I am going to show you these 4 men had even more layers of hardship and difficulty, but they concluded.
18. **It is not right for us to keep this all to ourselves.**
19. Again, I want to emphasize their words. This isn't right. It isn't right to keep this good news and this provision to ourselves when there are others who need to hear the good news and experience these good things.
20. And it is there we find the key thought that I want us to apply today.
21. Hardships, difficulties, trials, pandemics, whatever the circumstances might, be is not the time to draw back, and retreat into self-preservation. That wouldn't be right. Even in the most life

changing of circumstances our heavenly father wants us to still have in mind the calling he has given us to care about and reach out to others.

22. Church. I want to challenge you today. Covid-19 is not a reason to stop being who God has called us to be. It is the perfect opportunity to be who God has called us to be in even greater measure.
23. This isn't a time to stop living, it is a perfect time to keep living.
24. Living for the Lord. Living out our calling. Living out the mandate to be the light of Jesus to a lost and dying world.
25. Even...

An ugly, mean, selfish world.

1. I told you earlier I would uncover some additional layers of hardship and difficulty in the lives of these 4 lepers.
2. 2 Kings 7:4 If we say, 'We'll go into the city'--the famine is there, and we will die.
3. Notice with me where these 4 men physically are when they make this statement. They are outside of the city.
4. The city had a protective wall around it with gates for letting things and people in and out.
5. But these 4 lepers were not inside the city. They were outside the city.
6. Even though the conditions were terrible inside the city, for these 4 men they were worse.
7. Leprosy was considered a highly contagious skin disease. So contagious that lepers were forced to be quarantined until the affliction was healed. (I won't draw the parallels; I will let you do that)
8. So, in the midst of national and personal affliction, the very people who could have helped minister to these 4 men didn't want them anywhere near.
9. Their skin disease made them physically and spiritually unclean. They were outcasts. And as a result, they were cut off from their own countrymen, and vulnerable to the enemy on the outside that wanted to harm them.
10. So, when they come to the realization that it would not be right for them to keep the good news to themselves, the people who they were going to share the good news with didn't even care if they lived or died. (outside with the enemy)

11. But these 4 men put aside all those personal and physical differences and decided to do the right thing by going and sharing the good news with others.
12. In the case of Covid-19, what I see happening is this great cultural divide between so many.
13. We have people who think Covid-19 is a hoax or conspiracy, all the way to those who are taking it very seriously.
14. We have those who say the government should have no say in whether we social distance, all the way to those who follow the guidelines to a T.
15. There are those who think face masks are stupid, all the way to those who feel they are necessary.
16. Please hear me out this morning. I am not telling you how to think. Turn to your neighbor and say, Pastor is not telling us how to think.
17. Think however you want to think. But in your expression about what you think, are you at least willing to concede that what you and I think about Covid-19 is not the main thing right now.
18. The main thing is the same main thing it always has been. Jesus' plan to seek and save those who are lost.
19. Are we, like these 4 lepers, willing to at least consider that whatever belief or differences we may have with others about Covid-19, that the soul of our neighbor, and their seeing the love of Jesus flowing through us is the most important consideration?
20. And finally, this morning. It is wise for us to understand that...

It is not blessing flowing to us that is life giving, it is blessing flowing through us that is live giving.

1. 2 Kings 7:9-11 when they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." **10** So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, "We went into the Aramean camp and no one was there--not a sound of anyone--only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were." **11** The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace.

2. Notice with me the flow of not only life-giving information, but life-giving provision.
3. The 4 lepers said, this is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. Their actions had become a hinderance to the flow of good news.
4. So, they determined. We've got to change that.
5. In verse 10 the 4 lepers share the good news with the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers shouted the good news to others, and the others shared it with still others so that eventually the good news reaches the palace.
6. And as a result of the good news reaching the palace, eventually the entire city is saved.
7. As long as the 4 lepers were keeping the good news to themselves, no one else was receiving the benefits of that good news.
8. If they had kept the good news to themselves, everyone in the city would have died without hope.
9. **Life happens when blessing flows through us to others**, not just to us.

Conclusion:

1. I know what I am about to tell you next is probably nothing new to anyone. But do you know why the Dead Sea is called the Dead Sea?
2. It's called the Dead Sea because the waters of the Jordan river flow in, but there is no outlet.
3. Everything flows in, but nothing flows out.
4. The Dead Sea is 31 miles long. 9.5 miles wide. And 997 feet deep.
5. It's as long as from here to Bald Knob. And almost as wide as from here to Newark.
6. But it is a dead, salty body of water in which nothing is able to live.
7. You and I live, truly live, not when we allow blessing to flow to us, we truly live when we all blessing to flow through us.
8. To others. Who take it to others. Who take it to others. Until everyone knows and has heard the good news.

9. What if Covid-19 could actually be the beginning of a great move of God flowing through us to this city, this county, this region, this state, this nation, and to the world?
10. It can be if it doesn't stop with us.
11. Would you join me right now in crying out to God for the moving of his Spirit? For miracles. For changed lives.
12. Would you have the courage to pray...Lord, I don't want whatever personal differences I have with others keep them from seeing you in me?
13. Lord. I'm not will that blessing should flow to me. My desire is that blessing flow through me. And wherever you want it to flow to, I won't get in the way.