**ELISHA FEEDS GOD’S FLOCKS**

2 Kings 4:38-44

Key verse 43b

But Elisha answered, “Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’”

**Introduction**

In this passage, Elisha fed prophets by changing hurtful and unediable stew to sound and edible one and one hundred people with twenty loaves of barley bread. Through this we can learn about God who always pays attention to his people’s needs and feeds them enough through his mighty power. May the Lord help us to learn a shepherd heart to be sensitive to the needs of others and be willing to serve them with God’s compassionate heart. Help us to increase our faith so that we may not be restricted by what we have but rely on God and His unlimited power to serve others. Amen!

1. **Read verses 38-41. What did Elisha do when he returned to Gilgal? (38) What happened to the prepared stew when the prophets were about to eat it? (39-40) What did he do to solve the problem? (41)**

**1-1. Read verses 38-41**.

Elisha returned to Gilgal and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets.”

39 One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold. When he returned, he cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were. 40 The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, “Man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it.

41 Elisha said, “Get some flour.” He put it into the pot and said, “Serve it to the people to eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

**1-2. What did Elisha do when he returned to Gilgal? (38)**

* When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in that region. The famine lasted seven years(2Ki 8:1).
* While the company of the prophets was meeting with him.
* There were schools of prophets in Gilgal.
* Elisha was recognized as the leader of the prophets (2:15) and he might have taught them by visiting them regularly.
* One of the main things Elishs did was to raise up many prophets who could preach the word of God.
* To serve God’s people to repent and return to God, he didn’t preach all by himself. Rather he raised many prophets who could preach the word of God together.
* Raising up the prophets and bible teachers who can preach the word of God is God’s way, through which God saves people. God is still raising bible teachers.
* He said to his servant, **“Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets.**”
* Elisha knew the prophets were hungry- The company of the prophets didn’t have enough food because of the famine. The prophets might not have enough food even during normal days but now they were desperate due to the famine.
* The shepherd should always look out for the sheep's needs for both practical and spiritual needs.
* Elisha wanted to feed them with both spiritual food, the word of God and physical food. He didn’t take care of not only their spiritual needs but their practical needs as well.
* Jesus knew that people who came to him to hear his words were hungry and wanted to feed them.(Mk 6:37) God doesn’t want his people to starve but to be fed enough.
* God always provides us with not only spiritual bread but bread for our body as well. God pays attention to our practical needs.

**1-3. What happened to the prepared stew when the prophets were about to eat it? (39-40)** 

* One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold.
* The prophets didn’t have things to eat. So the prophet seemed to gather whatever that looked edible to make stew.
* The prophet found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold because there were many prophets there.
* The prophet had no idea about the wild but might be happy to find a wild vine that had many gourds.
* Some think the wild vine was **coloquintida**, a herb strongly cathartic, which could be dangerous if it is not well used.
* When he returned, he cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were.
* No one knew about the wild vine gourds. Outwardly the gourds might seem to be good to eat. But they contained elements that were harmful to those who ate them.
* There are many things in the world that look good to us even though they can hurt us. People consume things without knowing what they are and get damaged by them.
* We need to have discernment that comes from the Holy Spirit to distinguish what is good or bad.
* The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, “Man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it.
* The taste of the stew might be so bitter and cause sickness to the people immediately as they began to eat it.
* The wild vine gourds caused terrible bitterness and were even poisonous.

**1-4. What did he do to solve the problem? (41**)

* Elisha said, “Get some flour.” He put it into the pot and said, “Serve it to the people to eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.
* Elisha put some flour into the pot. And the bitterness and poison in the stew disappeared.
* The flour put into the pot changed the stew completely to have nothing harmful in it but become good food to eat. It is similar with the event that Elisha changed bad quality water into good water by putting salt into spring (1 Ki 2:21)
* This miracle demonstrated God transforming and healing power. God has the power that can change any harmful or hurtful things to be good and useful things.
* Through the miracle, God showed that he had the power to change sinners who were like bitter and poisonous stew because of their sin to become holy people who could bear good fruits that can please God.
* The flour removed the bitterness and poison in the stew when it was put into the stew by faith.
* The blood that Jesus shed on the cross for our sin can remove the sin that works in us causing death and making us useless. The blood of Jesus has the power to remove sin from useless sinners and transform them to be useful and fruitful. Anyone who believes in the power of the blood of Jesus can experience the power of blood. **How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:14)**
* Also the word of God has transforming and healing power as well.  **You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you. (John 15:3)**
* Elisha changed the stew to become edible instead of throwing it away. We were like stew with bitterness and poison because of sin. But God didn’t give us up. Instead, he changed us to become people who can bear good fruits that people can enjoy.
* Elisha fed the prophets even in the time of famine. God can meet his servants’ needs in any difficult situation.

1. **Read verse 42. What can we learn from a man from Baal Shalishah? (42a) What did Elisha do with the foods he had bought? (42b) What can we learn from the man and Elisha who used them to feed the people**?

**2-1. Read verse 42**.

A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. “Give it to the people to eat,” Elisha said.

**2-2. What can we learn from a man from Baal Shalishah? (42a)**

* A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain.
* He offered his first fruits to God by offering the foods to Elisha obeying God’s command. **When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, 2 take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name (Dt 26:1,2)**
* He showed that he was worshipping God by offering his first fruits to God.
* Offering the first fruit God is confession of faith that God is that one who gives us the fruit and provides everything for us to produce the fruit.
* It must be hard to worship God in the society where most of the people worshipped idols. But he kept his faith and expressed his faith through the offering.
* It was not easy to offer things to God in the time of famine. But he overcame fear and did what God wanted by faith.
* He also wanted to serve the servants of God who preached the word of God. In such a way he participated in God’s salvation work.
* What he brought was not big but was so valuable and precious especially in the time of the famine. The foods were given by faith and God used them previously.

**2-3. What did Elisha do with the foods he had bought? (42b)**

* “Give it to the people to eat,”
* People might be the company of the prophets.
* He wanted to feed the people first with the food that the man brought. He knew that people were hungry and wanted to feed them.
* Again Elisha noticed people’s need, their hunger and had compassion on them and wanted to feed them. This is the shepherd's heart.
* The food that the man brought was about 20 people’s portion. But he told them to share the food for a hundred of people by faith according to the word of God.(43)

**2-4. What can we learn from the man and Elisha who used them to feed the people?**

* The man kept his faith in God and served him in the idol worshipping generation. He brought first fruits of what he had produced as God commanded to support prophets. God used what the man offered by faith to feed many people who were hungry. He was a shiny star in deep darkness.
* Elisha took what the man brought precious, seeing the man’s faith in God and service for him. He used the food to feed the people by faith. He paid attention to people’s needs and had compassion on them and fed them with the foods that were offered by faith.
* This event is very similar to the event that Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. (Mark 6:30-44) We can see that Elisha’s compassioning heart for God’s flock and desire to feed them were those that Jesus had. Elisha had God’s heart and Spirit.

**3. Read verses 43-44. What did Elisha’s servant ask? (43a) What was his answer? (43b) What was the outcome? (44) What can we learn from the Lord who used Elisha to feed the people?**

**3-1. Read verses 43-44**.

43 “How can I set this before a hundred men?” his servant asked. But Elisha answered, “Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’” 44 Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.

**3-2. What did Elisha’s servant ask? (43a)**

* “How can I set this before a hundred men?
* The man brought food that was about 20 men’s portion. It was too small for a hundred men. The resources that they had were too small for their needs.
* What the servant said was similar to what Jesus’ disciples said when Jesus told them to feed the crowd. **“That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”**(Mark 6:37)
* From the human’s point of view, what Elisha said was not reasonable.
* When we try to help someone who is in need, especially spiritual need, we always feel like what we can offer is so small. So sometimes, we don't even try to help. But we should offer our help by faith in God.

**3-3. What was his answer? (43b)**

* “Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’”
* Elisha still told the servant to give the food to the people to eat according to what God said.
* Elisha believed that God could feed a hundred people with a small amount of the food just as he said even if it sounded unreasonable. He believed in his word and his mighty creation power.
* Elisha said that there would be even left over. God wanted to feed them abundantly even in the time of famine. God would not feed his people barely but abundantly. God can feed and provide us with what we need abundantly in any limited and impossible situation.

**3-4. What was the outcome? (44**)

* Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord
* The servant simply obeyed what Elisha had said.
* Hundreds of people ate enough and there were some left over.
* God fed a hundred people with twenty loaves of barley bread through Elisha.
* God demonstrated his mighty creation power. Jesus fed five thousands in the same way (Mt 14:13-21). God can feed us and provide us with whatever we need through his mighty creation power.
* There were leftovers even after people ate. God provided them abundantly as he promised.
* The people were very satisfied. We have to believe that God can feed us abundantly spiritually and practically in any situation. We also have to feed others by sharing what we have by faith.
* If we can find any need in us spiritually and practically, we have to ask God by holding his promise of provision.
* We see so many young people who are suffering from spiritual starvation. We can feed them by faith in God and his provision. Surly God will feed all of them abundantly as he said.

**3-5. What can we learn from the Lord who used Elisha to feed the people?**

* God is compassionate on his people who are hungry and feeds them with his almighty power.
* God used Elisha’s compassioning heart and faith in God to feed his flock. When we have Elisha’ heart for the people and faith, God can feed many starving souls abundantly through us. **I will bless her with abundant provisions;**

**her poor I will satisfy with food.(Ps 132:15)**

**Conclusion**

God always pays attention to our needs and wants to feed us enough through his mighty healing and creation power. We can have a great hope that God will heal and change us who can produce tasty fruits that can please God and bring benefits to the people. God can feed us abundantly with any limited resources and situations through his power. Thank God for feeding us always. May God help us to have Elisha’ heart so that we may also feed God’s flock by faith.

**One Word: Give it to the people to eat!**