

Go and Tell

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 July 2019

Preacher: Rev. Iain Thomson

[0 : 00] We're going to turn back now to 2 Kings chapter 7. And we can read again the words that we have in verse 9.

Although I don't want to confine my thoughts to that one verse, we can focus on that verse. Then they said to one another, We are not doing right.

This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.

If we had read in chapter 6, we would have learned that the king of Syria had sent his army, which was a vast army, to surround the city of Samaria where the king of Israel dwelt.

And obviously with this vast army surrounding the city of Samaria, nobody was able to get in or out. So their food supply was getting scarier and scarier until eventually we read in chapter 6 that they were starving to death, that they had resorted to cannibalism, that they were eating their own children, that a donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels, which was the equivalent of two pounds of silver.

[1 : 50] And the dove's droppings were sold for five shekels of silver. So you can imagine the hunger that the people within the city were experiencing.

Then the word of the Lord came through Elisha, which we find at the beginning of chapter 7, promising them that their circumstances were soon to change, that within 24 hours, that they would have more than they could possibly eat, that they would have sufficient to meet all of their needs. We can read these two verses at the beginning of chapter 7. Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time, a sea of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seas of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.

Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned, said to the man of God, If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be? But he said, You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.

Now though the king of Israel blamed the Lord for the calamity that had come upon them, God still had not forsaken his people, and he had a word for the king and for the nation.

[3 : 21] And it was a good word. It was a word that was going to bring blessing to them. And this blessing was going to be bestowed upon them within 24 hours.

Now what we want to focus on is the way or the instruments that God used to bring them news of this blessing. And he used lepers.

We read there in verse 3 and 4, Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance of the gate, and they said to one another, Why are we sitting here until we die?

If we say, Let us enter the city, the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. If we sit here, we shall die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians, And if they spare our lions, we shall live.

And if they kill us, we shall but die. Now there are many things that we could look at in this story.

[4 : 26] The unbelief of the guard, the man on whose hand the king lent, we could consider the miracle that God used in order to supply the needs of his people.

But I want to focus primarily upon these lepers. Now in these days, leprosy meant that they couldn't live within the community.

They had to be cast out of the community if they had leprosy. And if they saw anybody approaching them, they were to declare their uncleanness, so that people would stay well away from them, in case they themselves would catch the leprosy.

So we read here that they were sitting there at the entrance of the gate. And that's very often what lepers did. They stood at the entrance of the gate of the city.

They weren't permitted to go in, but they were hoping that the people passing by would show them mercy and give them something for them to live on. But the problem was, nobody was moving in and out of the city because of the Syrian army having it hemmed in.

[5 : 54] So they were fearing worse than anybody else because they weren't even getting anything from anybody that might be passing by.

They were in a worse situation than even the people within the city. Now they were lepers. And leprosy was an awful thing, but it gives us a picture.

The scripture itself uses it as a picture to illustrate for us the depravity that sin has brought into our hearts.

We read in Isaiah chapter 1, Isaiah using it for that reason, to show the moral and spiritual depravity of the people of his own day.

Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

[7 : 04] Now there's a picture of the devastation that sin has caused in the soul of mankind. Paul tells us that we're all dead in trespasses and sins.

Now leprosy gives us a picture of the death that has entered into our souls. We are totally depraved. There isn't a faculty of our souls that haven't been touched.

From the crown of our heads to the sole of our feet, spiritually, we have been marred. There isn't a faculty within us that is operating in the way that it was created to operate.

And we are outside of God's kingdom. Just as the lepers were cast out of the community, we, as we are by nature, have no fellowship with God.

We have no fellowship with God's people. We are outcasts. Now these lepers were dying. Now not only were they dying of the disease that they had, but they were now dying of starvation.

[8 : 26] We also are dying. All of us have the sentence of death over us. Paul writing to the Romans tells us that death passed upon all men.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that it's been appointed unto all men once to die, and after that, the judgment. So each minute of our lives are bringing us closer to our death.

Now being in church is not going to save us. Even by being members of the church will not save us. The spiritual death, that is the disease that has permeated every faculty of our souls, cannot be dealt with by anybody in this world.

There is only one that can save us. Now these lepers were faced with a decision. And they thought about their situation.

They were facing certain death. They started to use their common sense and to reason. Now that's what God wants all of us to do, regardless of who we are.

[10 : 05] He wants us to use our common sense and to begin to reason. Come, let us reason together, says the Lord. They started to turn the question over in their minds.

If we stay here, we're going to die. If we go into the city, we're going to die. So what are we going to lose if we go to the Syrians who have the power to keep us alive?

because the worst that they can do to us is to kill us, which is what's going to happen to us anyway. Now their logic was perfect.

There are always two courses of action for us to take. we can sit where we are and do nothing and we're going to die.

We can decide to become religious and become members of the church, but if that's all we have, then we're going to die.

[11 : 12] Or we can face what we might consider to be the one who has the power of life and death at his disposal and the worst that he can do to us is put us to death, but he might spare us.

Now if you have not received Christ as your Savior, you might consider him to be the enemy. You might be blaming him for all the difficulties that you may have encountered in your life.

You might be blaming him for the adversity that you're experiencing at this very moment. The king of Israel was blaming God for their adversity.

But these four lepers decided, well, let's face our adversary. Let's go and confront our foe only to realize that as they did so, that he wasn't their foe at all because he had performed a miracle.

And rather than experience death, they experienced life. they found an abundance more than they could possibly make use of.

[12 : 44] And that's how it is with everybody who didn't just sit there to die, waiting for God to do something, coming along to church, waiting for God to act in their lives.

They took things into their own hands. They said, the inevitable is that if we just carry on the way that we are, we're going to die.

We're going to die eternally. We're going to die a spiritual, eternal death in hell. So let's just confront the one that we think is the one that is our foe and who knows he might spare us and to everybody who ever went to Christ was their surprise that he didn't actually put them to death but that he wanted them to live and that he had made ample provision to meet all of their needs more than they themselves could possibly use.

That brings us to the second thing that I want to mention concerning these lepers and that is their responsibility. The lepers quite rightly enjoyed the miracle that God had provided.

But they also realized that the gift that God had given them was not just for themselves but that they needed to share it. They realized that to remain silent was selfish.

[14 : 34] We read there in verse 9 we are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light punishment will overtake us.

Now therefore come let us go and tell the king's household. They realized that they had been worse off than everybody else in the city and now they realize that they are actually better off than anybody that is in the city and they realize that the responsibility is not to keep it to themselves but to share it.

We are not doing right. It sums it all up. If we receive the blessings of God we need to remember that the blessings are not just for us to enjoy for ourselves to make us happy.

God has blessed us so that we might share it with those who are just as much in need of him as we are.

Jesus said concerning his disciples that out of their hearts would flow rivers of living water. He also exhorted them that they were not to hide their lights under a bushel.

[16 : 07] now not everybody has what we have if we have received Christ as our saviour. but our responsibility is not to keep that to ourselves.

Our responsibility is to share it with those who haven't yet received him. And this is where our witnessing begins.

when we realize that others all around us are perishing and we don't have to look very far.

You might just look to the person next to you to realize that there are people in this very building who are going to perish in hell.

There are people out with this building, people in the community, members of our own families that are going to perish eternally unless they receive Christ as their saviour.

[17 : 18] We have that message and we are in a position to be able to help them by conveying God's message to them.

Now, I know it's not easy to speak to anybody about salvation. Particularly members of our own families. If it was easy, we wouldn't need grace.

But Christ guarantees us the grace. He has guaranteed us that the Holy Spirit will give us the courage if we will but trust him.

Now, unfortunately, some will not progress further than the first stage that the lepers were at. They began to hold it up for themselves.

But then they realized we're not doing right. This is not right. We can't just keep this to ourselves. We need to share this.

[18 : 27] We need to go and tell the king's household. compassion. That brings us to our third point, the compassion that these lepers showed. Now, it took courage because there were outcasts in their society.

And it took courage for them to go back to the city gates because they were running the risk of being put to death. They weren't permitted to pass into the city.

they weren't permitted to come near to people that didn't have leprosy. But they were permitted to go to the gates and to shout to the gate keepers.

Now, it took courage for them to do that because they knew that they were outcasts and that it was very likely that they wouldn't listen to them anyway.

And people might not want to hear what we say. Especially if we're going to tell them about what Christ has done for our souls and what Christ is able to do for their souls.

[19 : 48] Because people in the community consider Christians as outcasts to the community. They're unclean. They spoil their fun. they matter everything that they want to do in their own understanding.

And they don't want to listen to what they think or what message they might bring concerning their need of salvation. people in situation.

Now for these lepers to go to the city that was full of people that had probably passed by them on other occasions and completely ignored them because they were outcasts to their society, to their community.

very often the families of lepers were told a funeral service when they contracted leprosy because they considered them as already dead.

And after such treatment these people could very well have said to themselves why are we going to bother going to them? They don't deserve it after the way they treated us.

[21 : 04] Many of them passed us by every day didn't give us a second glass. Why should we worry about their fate? But that's not what they did.

Because they realized that the people in the city had to hear the message. So they did the right thing. Because if this is the way God had dealt with them by showing compassion to them surely they should show compassion to others.

So they did the right thing. They went to the city gates so that they might spread this message.

And that's the final point that we want to consider. That the message was reluctantly received but it was acted upon. The lepers went to the gate cupish.

church. They couldn't contact the people inside the city. But they did speak to the people that they could contact. And the message did spread.

[22 : 24] Until the message got to the king's household. And the king himself. And he received it in exactly the same way as most people when they first hear this message.

he received it with skepticism. His initial thought was it's a trap. He thought that the Syrians were setting up a trap for them to get them out of the city and take advantage of them.

And that's how people very often treat the gospel. they think there's a hidden agenda with the Christians that bring that message.

They think there must be more to it than that. It's too good for them to be true. And they think the shahudan agenda there is a trap.

Surely God wouldn't be so gracious as to treat us in the way that he treated these lepers.

[23 : 39] But thankfully the king didn't have a completely closed mind. He listened to one of his servants who advised, well let's put it to the test.

Why don't we send somebody out to find out if it's the case or not? And that's the challenge for all of you who haven't yet come to receive Christ for yourselves.

You've heard about it often enough. You've heard about the rich blessings that God's people receive as a result of coming to accept Jesus Christ as their saviour.

And the fact that you're here in church would seem to indicate that you haven't completely closed your mind against considering that maybe there is something to it.

good. So why don't you put it to the test for yourselves? Why don't you find out for yourselves if the news is really as good as his people claim it to be?

[24 : 45] The king sent out messengers to find out for himself whether this was the case or not. They came and reported back in the morning stating it's exactly as they said.

The Syrian camp was empty. We went all the way to the Jordan and we found their weapons and their clothes which they had thrown off in their haste littering the whole road.

There isn't a Syrian to be seen anywhere. And of course the news went round the whole city. So the king ordered his commander the person on whom he leaned in our modern day equivalent his prime minister to go and guard the gate because he knew once the news got out that the people would just rush out and feast on this great provision that God had prepared for them.

So the officer who was in the group of unbelief because as soon as the message of what God was going to do had come the previous day he said supposing God himself were to open the windows of heaven what you are saying couldn't possibly be true.

To which Elisha replied you will see it with your own eyes but you will not taste of any of it. And the king commanded him to go and guard the gate but he was trampled under foot by the rush of people that were going out to see that the windows of heaven actually had been opened.

[26 : 40] And they thought it was the enemy that had all the power they were surrounded they had all the provision only to discover that it was the enemy that God had used to bring that provision for them.

Because all the provision belongs to God. Nothing belongs to this world or to Satan. And God can take it away from them at any given moment and give it to his own people.

Because God is the sovereign God. And what God says in his word is what God is going to do for his people. And this is what was proved within 24 hours of God's word being proclaimed.

And the man of unbelief was trampled under foot. And that's what we have to do with our evil heart of unbelief.

We need to trample it under foot. And we need to lay hold of God's word. Because God's word will not return unto him void until it accomplishes that which God has purpose to accomplish.

[28 : 05] It will be as he says. Now our father's message was first of all treated with skepticism. Thankfully the king had it tested.

And the end result was that the whole city was saved. What a blessing. If we saw the whole of the community of Point being saved.

as a result of us taking God at his word and seeking to convey this message to the people that we live alongside.

This all started with four men who refused to keep the blessing to themselves because they believed it was wrong to do so.

And when you're prepared to go out in obedience to the commission that Christ gave to his church to proclaim this news to all nations.

[29 : 16] When you're prepared to go out and proclaim that message, being well aware that the results of that message aren't within your power, but that it lies within the power of God, then who knows, but that God might use you as he used these four lepers.

Because that's what we all are, spiritually. We are lepers, saved by grace. God not even God himself can save people.

Because God has purpose to save people through the preaching of the gospel. gospel. And as Paul said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation. It doesn't lie with man, it lies with God. And we ought not to be ashamed of this message. We ought to be eager to share this message.

because how can they come to faith unless they hear the word of God? That's the apostles' argument. People will never come to faith unless they hear the word of God.

[30 : 49] We've all been commissioned to go out with this message. Because God has determined and purposed that he will save a people for himself.

and they're within our communities. Now some of the early disciples are well known in the gospels for some of the traits that they bore.

And when we think of Andrew, we think of him as the one who was always bringing somebody to Christ. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ.

Andrew brought the little boy with the loaves and the fishes to Christ. Andrew along with Philip brought Greeks to Christ. Why do you think Andrew did that?

Well, Andrew did that because he knew what he had in Jesus and he appreciated it. And he wanted that to be shared with others.

[31 : 59] church. Will that be one of the traits that we bear? That it will be said of us, he was always seeking to bring people to Christ.

Because Christ is the only one that can save us. It's not by bringing people just to church. Yes, that's a good thing. But they need to go further than that.

They need to come to Christ. And people can come to church and never come to Christ. And people who have never been to church can come to Christ.

And the important thing is that they come to Christ. That they come and test this for themselves.

And that they discover for themselves that Christ's provision for our souls is far more abundant than we'll ever be able to use.

There is enough and sufficient here for everybody. So why should we hold this to ourselves? We need to go and share this message.

[33 : 10] Because if we're not, we are not doing right. That's what the Leborch concluded. We are not doing right and keeping silent.

I'm not going to proclaim this to the city. May God grant that he would bless to us these thoughts.
Let's pray. Let's pray.