

Losing our Usefulness

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- [0 : 00] We are going to turn towards God's Word and read in the book of 2 Kings, chapter 6.
Book of 2 Kings, chapter 6. We'll read from the beginning. 2 Kings, chapter 6.
I'll just read a short passage there. This is God's Word. May we know it, and know it to be His Word in our hearts. And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too straight for us.
Let us go, we pray thee, unto the Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make a place there where we may dwell.
And he answered, Go ye. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.
- [1 : 26] So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water.
And he cried and said, Alas, master, for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it?
And he showed him the place, and he cut down a stick, and cast it thither. And the iron did swim. Therefore he said, Take it up to thee.
And he put out his hand, and took it. Amen. May the reading of God's word be blessed to us today. We'll continue in praise by singing in Psalm 65.
Psalm 65. We'll sing from verse 4 down to the end of verse 5. That's on page 122 of the Black Book.
- [2 : 37] Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, and makes approach to thee, that he within thy courts, O Lord, may still a dweller be. We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace, and with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place.
O God of our salvation, thou in thy righteousness, by faithful works and to our prayer, thine answer dost express. Therefore the ends of all the earth, and those afar that be, upon the sea, their confidence, O Lord, will place in thee.
We'll stand and sing these verses to God's praise. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, and the Lord, may still a dweller be.
Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, and the Lord, may still a dweller be. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, and the Lord, may still a dweller be.
We should be satisfied with thy love.
- [4 : 22] Amen. of salvation.
The men the discussions to give the players December prayers.
to the prayers, I am so close to the prayer.
If for the ends of all the earth, I am so sad and hear the wonder see their confidence O Lord who has said to me.

If we can turn back together to the passage that we read, the short account of the axe head that was lost in the river Jordan. And we'll take the whole account and we'll look at the whole thing.

[6 : 41] Looking at this account, I always liked this passage myself. It seems there's almost a comical element to it but I always wondered why this was here.

What is there to learn from this passage? But one thing I knew about it was that I valued it. Elisha did a miracle for this axe head that seemed so insignificant.

And it seems to fall into the chapter here, chapter 6 at the beginning, it's completely on its own. It's got no relation to what has gone before or what comes after it.

It's almost as if it were a memory that was put there by the men that scribed the works of Elisha. And you can imagine someone stating almost that, you know, remember the time that the axe head fell into the river and Elisha took it up with a stick.

But what we have here is not just an amusing memory. It is not just the recovery of the axe head for a practical side of things.

[7 : 55] But there's a recovery of peace to the man who lost it. There's a personal element here of restoration. The man who had experience that would give him much concern and much worry.

Even though it seems such a small thing to lose the head of his axe. But is that not exactly what we do as people? We worry over the smallest of things.

And there are differing opinions on this passage. But I heard someone say once that it's often the simplest explanation is the most right.

So we will just look at the passage. See what it says together. Apply it. Apply it. And is there any benefits to us in it? And in doing so we'll take three points of looking at the men.

We'll look at the man. And then we'll look at the master. So the men, the man, and the master. What can we say about the men?

[9 : 08] Look at verse 1. And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now the place where we dwell with thee is too straight for us.

Well first of all the sons of the prophets. They are just the pupils of Elisha. They are the men. They have heard about the works of Elisha.

Maybe even witnessed his works. They are following after him and are committed to his words. The words from God. Elisha was the man of God for their time.

And we read that they come with the call to Elisha. Behold now the place where we dwell with thee is too straight for us. Their home is too small. The group is increasing in number and they've outgrown the building.

There is a loss of comfort to them. And so they seek to make a practical provision for each man by extending their living space.

[10 : 15] And so further to the call that they make, they also give Elisha a request to him. Verse 2. Let us go, we pray thee, unto the Jordan.

And take thence every man abeim. And let us make a place there where we may dwell. It reads that every man has gone.

It says in verse 2, every man abeim. It was to be shared out this job. Everyone was to do their part in helping to provide for each other.

And there are a few things here to note by itself. It's healthy for the church to be growing and equally healthy to be providing for the needs of the church as they arise.

It's hugely encouraging to see a church grow and to meet the needs as they come. But it would not be a healthy church if we ourselves were not willing to sacrifice our time for others.

- [11 : 24] And make sufficient provision to meet the needs of others. Are we willing and cheerful contributors to God's church?

And that could be in any capacity. That could be even just a visit or a listening ear to someone. But in all things, seeking the guidance and approval from the head of the home, Jesus Christ.

And that means prayer. Lord, show me is this the way. Lord, is this right for us to do this?

Should I be doing this? Often we pray things like that. Asking God to show us. And I hope that you can say that he has shown himself to you.

And particularly in a time of your own congregation's vacancy. You know, we need to have the same mind to come together.

- [12 : 32] And to pray to God. Asking for that guidance. Coming to the Master, the Lord Jesus. And asking that he would show you the way to go.

But all the men that went here in our passage. There would have been some who went for big logs to use as structural parts. There would have others needed to find longer, thinner ones for beams.

All different kinds of bits of wood would have been needed to construct this building. Everyone was to take his part. Everyone was to take a part with him.

To build it. And this is when the building would have been strongest. Supposing even just one decided he would not help. Supposing he thought maybe he wasn't needed.

Maybe he thought himself that he was too young. Maybe he thought he was too old. Too weak. Maybe he didn't have enough knowledge about building things.

- [13 : 39] Regardless of whatever reason he would have thought. Of why he wouldn't have joined with these people. There would have been a part missing.

Because every man was to take a part. To provide for each other. And this is when it would be as strong as it could be. And you can imagine yourselves in your own homes.

And say for example. That you were missing a door hinge. Just one. I don't know if you've ever tried to open a door.

That is only hanging on one hinge. It doesn't work that well. It's wobbly. It falls over. You can actually feel the weight of it. It's heavy.

The lack of the second hinge just doesn't allow the door to function like you would expect. Doesn't it function how you would want it. Or how you would think it would. And additionally it puts extra pressure on the ones that is left.

- [14 : 46] And it strains the other hinge. You see. Each of us are of great value. Each of us are a support to one another.

We're all weight bearers. We're all prayer makers. We're listeners. We may be teachers.

You know it could be any context. We could be just handymen. We could be cleaning. We could be cleaning. Let's all do our part to help one another. God has a place for you.

Are we willing? Are we cheerful in our giving to anything that we can do for the sake of the gospel? and maybe you might be saying well yes the men had to make a building because there was too many there and you might look around and say well there's nobody here that's just what the devil says there's nobody there but look at who is here look at the potential you have in each of you that is here are we helping one another that is gathered here are we looking after each other are we working together does my heart desire to work with the Lord's people and for the Lord's people Philippians 2 verse 4 and 5 says that let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus not a mind in anything else but Christ Jesus anything else and we are lacking do we go as one mind what does Jesus himself pray in John 17 that great prayer verses 22 and 23 he prays see the importance of being together and that the world and that the world may know that thou has sent me and has loved them as thou has loved me see the importance of being together of being one so that the world will know other translations have it so that the world may know that you have sent me and has loved them as thou has loved me our oneness is an example to the world that he has loved them and that's what we want that's what we want people to know

Christ loves you that's the greatest thing that we can show anyone and maybe the best way of showing it is to be of one mind together it is vital for the church as a whole and maybe then if we have one mind together maybe then it would grow see the sons of the prophets here the unity of mind between them would have been there long before they decided to make a building they'd wanted to do it together it wasn't just I don't think it was just because they needed a new building that they were working together I think they had the one mind together in all things in all that they did and you know if we can't do it with the few people that we have it would not happen with any growth with the more and you yourself may not feel that significant like the one of lack or like the like lacking one hinge in our home it affects the operation of our house and you know we don't appreciate the door hinge every time we use the door but you'd sure notice if it wasn't there and maybe we as a people are guilty of not appreciating everyone that is here or even feel that you yourself are not valued but you know what each of you would be missed if they weren't here and you would miss them if they weren't it's vice versa we all have different gifts we all bring different benefits

[19 : 58] God has given us different gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us let us use them Romans 12 verse 6 so what about you is this church missing you is someone here a missing part of this church or on the other hand are we as a church portraying in our lack of unity of mind something bad to those who walk in people that walk in the front door of this church you know we want them to come in but it's our lack of unity preventing people from coming and not just this church all churches every single church here believers in Christ

Jesus who should have one mind together working together I'm not just saying it's this church every believer the church of God no church is perfect you know we are a family of believers and there's nothing worse than divisions in a family but there's nothing better than the love of a family that comes together and works together and looks after each other and helps each other there's nothing better than that and that's what we should be as a church people who are looking out for each other and meeting each other's needs but going on Elisha finds favour with the men as they requested and he answers to them go at the end of verse 2 go ye but one man asks the father request and a very important one as well be pleased to go with your servants and Elisha is in favour of going with them this one man is wise enough to seek the watchful eye of his teacher over everything he does it's not too normal a task or too laborious a work for the master not to come or him not to have his eye over it and so we must be of the same mind again regardless of what our duties are regardless of our current labour in our lives that we do not cast the watchful eye of our master away and that we would always ask for his presence with us even the mundane tasks and the important ones we as children of God require his eye over us in all things and we ask him to come with us that's what we as a people should be asking of Jesus come with us so that's the name let us look at the man as the work progresses in verse 4 he went with them and they cut down wood but in verse 5 it says but as one was filling a beam the axe head fell into the water and for this man his work has stopped he has lost the vital part of the equipment needed to carry out the task and we can ask why and we're not too clear or sure of any concrete answers if indeed there were a reason but we could say that and I want to suggest to you that maybe he had been working hard all this wood was getting cut the axe had done so much that the head had come off it he had become totally preoccupied with what he had to do that he didn't notice the head working loose and maybe he was proud of doing all that he could all that he can maybe he was someone that was saying look at what I am doing look at all the bits of wood that

I've cut out maybe he needed to be stopped maybe he was too consumed with what he was doing but we'll come back to that thought later we cannot be sure of the reason but there are a few things we can be sure of he has lost the iron of the axe but he's lost more than the iron he was once useful but now he has lost the head all he is left with is the handle and he is going to have no impact to fell any logs with the handle he can use all his effort but without the head of the axe he's wasting his time he's wasting his energy and not only that with the loss of the head he had a loss of peace in his heart and he had loss of the worth that he was he couldn't do anything now he was worried for what had fallen maybe he didn't sure enough care what he had been given to him the borrowed axe now he's sitting at the bottom of the river

Jordan you know as we work our way through our lives we drift and we lose our way with our Lord and he takes from us a peace that we had we lose our peace that's within us and he takes that's taken from us almost as if we were to lose the head of the axe that cuts our way forward and we feel just stopped we can't go anywhere because of our sins you know after all our efforts we feel empty we can't do anything and we worry and we seem to have lost the peace and joy that we had in the Lord this happens when pride edges in and we need to be taught a lesson and our mind gets redirected to ourselves rather than on God what can I do is what we say maybe we need to be stopped

God knows what is best for us maybe that's what is best for us the second thing that we can be sure of about this man is that he knows it will cost him you know have you ever had that sickening feeling when something's happened and you can't do anything about it it's almost what's happening here the borrowed axe head falls into the depth of the Jordan and in his best understanding he cannot do anything about it he can't get a replacement for it no doubt he would value the kindness of the man who gave it to him but expected a great cost to return it he probably didn't have anything this man that's why they were building their own place and in this itself there is an honesty in him he's not as other men that might say well it wasn't mine anyway I don't care but this was a son of the prophet

[27 : 56] Elisha and in the previous chapter there is an account of a man called Gehazi who was dishonest and he was blighted with leprosy because of his dishonesty you see maybe this man had learned to be honest and knew the best thing in his life was to be honest you know are we honest not before me or the others here but are we honest before God so he goes on this man goes on to the one who knows he can answer his need he's honest he cannot meet the cost of it and often there are experiences in our lives that are just way beyond anything that we can do about it and to other people it might seem so small but to some it is such a trial such a worry such a concern and it leaves us only one thing to do and that is to go to the master go to the

Lord Jesus Christ the third thing we know about this man is that the head was returned to him note that he cried to Elisha first of all he didn't try to return it himself he knew it would be pretty much impossible to find it he just couldn't do anything about it and he went straight to his master maybe hoping he would provide a replacement to the man that he had borrowed it from well he did the right thing and going to him go to the one who can help you go to the one who listens to you tell Jesus your problems the small and great that we face and he recovers he recovers the situation we must learn that to bring it to him but note how

Elisha recovered the axe it says in verse 6 that he cut down a stick and he used a stick and he didn't fish about with the stick he simply threw it into the Jordan stick that would have been cut from a branch used requiring the use of another man's axe it says that he cut Elisha and if pride were an issue that we mentioned before this would certainly have humbled him maybe the use of this stick was a lesson do not forget about the others maybe one day or one day you will need them you rely on them you need each other help each other you're entirely supportive of each other do not become proud in your work even if it is a good work and so when the stick went in however big the stick was

I wish we knew the size of it did it even make a splash did it make a ripple but the stick floated and in the same manner so did the axe head the man was wise enough to call to his master even for something that may have seemed not worth of any divine input it's a small thing when we look at it it might have been a big thing to him but his cry was not ignored by the master so we'll briefly turn to the master the master of these men provided in a small way for the man himself but also for the disciples as a whole he simply restores the lost item and as Christians we hold to our master the Lord Jesus Christ as these men would have held to Elisha that we would desire to learn from him that we would hear his words

Elisha silently meets the need regardless of there was any failings in this man whether pride was an issue or not so Christ meets our needs regardless of what we are he is one who knows the smallest and biggest things in our lives and he loves you similarly he knows you better than you know yourself and he loves you regardless and whatever impurities you see in your own life guaranteed he sees them and he sees every other impurity that you do not see and still he is willing to go with you when you ask him to still he is willing to comfort you when you cry to him still he is willing to provide for you when you call to him what is your call to Christ today is it a big or small what are you worrying about have you lost your peace has joy been taken from you the master can help have you realised there is a cost required of you that you cannot meet have you realised your soul will be lost if you do not ask the master to help you will not get far on your own without him come to him and plead to him he is one that can restore your joy and your peace your soul so do we seek his approval in all things in every work that we endeavour to do do you bring your plans before him in prayer not forgetting as in the kids talk that we will be suitably prepared by the presence of the master would it not be wise for each of us to say before we leave that house be pleased to go with your servants especially when we work for his glory that we are joined together in one mind and that he would reveal to us great wonder of his power within our hearts we as believers in the

[34 : 43] Lord Jesus Christ seek to build the church we desire to share the gospel message that we would share each of what God has done for us what has he given back to you what has he restored to your soul I as much as anyone need reminded of this may the dwelling place of the master's disciples be filled to capacity here and may his kingdom come for there is a saviour there is a master that can provide beyond everything that we can comprehend yet also provide in ways that we wouldn't think he would comprehend things that would be too small for him he surprises us in the little things as he does in the big your need is not below the work of

Christ nor is your concern too little for the king of glory what does he say to you today where is your problem what have you lost how often do we need to cry alas my master pour out your heart to the one who listens he who is so willing to go with you and he will raise up great treasure from the depths of his grace treasure that he will restore treasure that he has restored but he says to you today take it up that's what elusha said to the man take it up to thee the master has done the work christ has done the work at calvin he can recover your soul from death he can save it and restore it he sets his work before you what he did by dying on the cross will you believe him will you call to him alas my master will you trust him first not relying on anything you can do for sure you can go to the master who can will you take him with you will you take him with you amen may these thoughts be blessed to us we'll conclude by singing in psalm 133 we'll sing the whole psalm psalm 133 behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell like precious ointment on the head that down the beard would flow even

Aaron's beard and to the skirts did off his garments go as Hermon's dew the dew that doth on Zion's hill descends for there the blessing God commands life that shall never end we'll stand we'll sing these verses to God's praise behold how good a thing it is heart can't anth Started sing hills filling to in and how shall tell which Ver per d % is As brethren now In unity to end Like precious ointment

On the head That down the beard did flow In Aaron's fear And to the scour Did all of his garments go As Aaron's true The true act of On Zion His death For there the blessing Of God

By the blood of your name And the blood of your name Amen Concluding prayer Heavenly Father We thank you for this time together And we ask that you would be pleased to go with us As we part one another Returning to our own homes We pray that you would bind us in love of unity for one another And we acknowledge before you that We cannot Uphold unity between All believers in Christ But we look forward To the day That there will be And the promise Of one mind And one sight Looking upon The man that died Unblemished to spotless Lamb That shall be Our light For all eternity May we have our eyes Directed towards him

[41 : 26] This day And may we know The blessing Of the spirit Keeping us And watching over us And the loving kindness Of the father And the salvation Provided in Jesus Christ Amen Amen