

THE OIL THAT KEPT FLOWING...

On the Sunday morning before we left home, I felt Jackie and I should take communion together as we sometimes do, bringing all our needs to the Lord and reminding ourselves of the finished work of Jesus Christ. As always, we had to look away from our needs to see Jesus, and apply His name and blood to our lives in expectation that He will meet every need.

I took a jar of grape juice out of the refrigerator and noticed it was almost gone. I began pouring what little was in the jar into a small glass for our communion service. As I poured the last drop of juice, suddenly I remembered the story in 2 Kings 4 about the widow and her two children. Her husband, a son of the prophets, had died. She was in debt and the creditors were about to take her children away. She came to Elisha, who said "What do you have in the house?"

"Only a jar of oil", she said.

Elisha instructed her to go to her neighbors and get all the empty vessels she could find. "Don't get a few," was the command. In other words, she was to get many vessels, a lot of them. Empty ones, of course. She did this, and then followed the instruction to go in her house with her children, shut the door and start pouring the oil out of her little jar into the empty containers.

I imagine she filled the room with these empty containers.

And, as you probably know, the oil kept flowing...and filling each vessel. It never stopped, until there were no more vessels to fill.

I am sure that, had they found more empty vessels to fill, more oil would have flowed. As long as there was another empty vessel, the oil supernaturally kept flowing and filling. She was told to sell the oil, and pay her debts, which she did, and she and her children lived on the rest of the profit.

As I poured the last drop of juice, it was as if I stepped into this story, as if I stepped out of our kitchen into the house of that widow. When I came into the living room where Jackie was sitting, I sat down with the little bit of juice and the cracker for us to celebrate the Lord's communion. We had placed our needs between us, a folder of bills and needs for this trip. In a moment I saw that these were not just needs, but vessels waiting to be filled. Instantly, I was actually happy for all these needs, for they were opportunities for God to pour in His supernatural provision. I thought, "Wow, am I glad we have all these needs. As long as we have needs, the oil of God's power and provision will keep flowing. And, praise the Lord, when we come home, we'll have more needs. And the next month we'll have more needs. And the month after, more needs."

Not only was it our own needs beside us, but all the needs of the Ukrainians, as well as those of our children, our church, and our friends. Hallelujah, I thought...the oil will keep flowing, and I hope we never run out of needs! (small chance of that.)

"I LOVE PROBLEMS!"

Pastor Gregori says to us now and then, "I love problems. The bigger the better. It's interesting to me to solve them."

I think God is like that. He loves problems. He loves to solve them.

But a problem or need is not a vessel waiting to be filled until it is brought to the Lord in expectation and faith. In the widow's case, she was desperate. But the oil only flowed when she heard the word of God and presented all the vessels in God's presence, in faith and obedience doing what He said. Then the supernatural supply came. And kept coming. And coming. And coming.

I asked the Bible school students the other day to count their problems. I counted mine. I asked how many did they have. Ten? Twenty? Get more, I said. The oil of God's faithfulness and grace and power and provision is flowing, and it will keep flowing as long as there is another problem, another need, presented to Him. After all, a need is just an empty space waiting to be filled with God's solution! If you run out of problems, I told them, go next door to your neighbor and get his or her problems. Go out on the street and collect some more problems. Bring them all into the presence of God. The oil of His presence and power will keep flowing as long as there are desperate and hungry people who have large needs and the "foolishness of faith", the audacity to believe, the simplicity of obedience. The oil will keep flowing!

And so for you. In your mind, turn your problems into vessels that are waiting to be filled with God.

The thing about a vessel, say a cup on the shelf, is this. It sits there waiting to be filled. It is available. So, let your needs and problems be placed before God, and give Him the opportunity to pour the oil of His Spirit into those needs.

Remember, the oil fills all vessels. It doesn't matter what kind of a vessel it is. As long as it is empty. It could be a need for healing, for finances, for wisdom, for family restoration, for ministry. The oil of God's Spirit will provide for all those vessels.

Praise God for your needs, and thank Him that you have plenty of them to be filled. Just get more from those around you to make sure you keep an endless supply of opportunities for God to show Himself strong and faithful!