

Anthology | Learning to Love the Stories of God

Week 8: A Gracious Feast (2 Kings 6:8-23)

Read the story:

When?

This story occurs in the era of Kingdom Divided. It's after the kingdom split into the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah.

Who?

Elisha (prophet), Elisha's servant, King of Syria, King of Syria's servants, Syrians, Syrian army, King of Israel, Israelites, the Lord

Where?

Samaria (Capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel)

Summarize the story:

The king of Syria was warring against the Northern kingdom of Israel and makes plans to set up a secret camp. God sends word to the King of Israel through Elisha warning them not to go near the Syrian camp. The King of Israel listens to the warning from Elisha and avoids this place saving many lives. The King of Syria is troubled by this and asks his servants if one of them is a mole informing the king of Israel of their location. They tell him it's not one of them, but Elisha, God's prophet who tells the King of Israel everything as if he was in their camp listening to them. So the Syrian King tells them to seize him.

The Syrians send horses and chariots and a great army out in the middle of the night. In the morning Elisha's servant realizes they are surrounded by an army of horses and chariots. He is afraid and asks Elisha what they should do. Elisha tells him not to be afraid for those who are with them are greater than those of the Syrian army. Elisha prays that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant that he may see. Elisha's servant sees a mountain of horses and chariots of fire all around. The Syrians come down to attack them and Elisha prays for God to strike the army with blindness. God does so. Then Elisha tells them the army to follow him and he will lead them to the one they seek. He leads them to Samaria.

When they get there, Elisha prays for God to open their eyes. God does so and they realize they are in the midst of Samaria. The King of Israel asks Elisha if he should strike this enemy army down? Elisha says no, but instead that he should take care of them, feed them, give them water and send them back to their master. The king of Israel sets a feast for the Syrian army and sends them away back to their master.

After this gracious treatment, this group of Syrians no longer fights against the kingdom of Israel.

Analyze the story:

Attributes of God displayed:

- God is gracious to His people. He graciously warns his people about the Syrian camp.
- God is gracious to His enemies. Through Elisha, He tells the King of Israel to prepare a feast for his enemies instead of killing them.
- God hears our prayers. He hears and answers Elisha's prayers.
- God is powerful. He protects Elisha and His servant with angels and chariots of fire.
- God is sovereign. He's in control of what appears to be a very chaotic and hopeless situation where Elisha and his servant are surrounded by their enemies.
- God protects His people. He sends angels and chariots of fire to protect Elisha and his servant.
- God opens eyes. He helps Elisha's servant see how He's protecting them.
- God closes eyes. He blinds the Syrian army so they no longer pose a threat.

Who is who in the story? (Who is like us? Who is like Christ?)

- We are like Elisha's servant in that we doubt God. When we become afraid, we look to ourselves for answers.
- We are like Elisha and his servant in that we need God to protect us from His enemies.
- We are like the Syrian army in that we don't get what we deserve; which is death. Instead we get to feast with the King.
- We are like the Syrian army in that we are blind and need to be led.
- We are like the King of Syria in that we have warred against God and made ourselves His enemies. We are rebellious and seek after our own kingdoms.

- Jesus is like Elisha in that He sends word to the King of Israel about the Syrian camps. He serves as a go between who graciously brings God's Word and warnings to the His people.
- Jesus is like Elisha in that He intercedes on behalf of the people by praying that the Lord strike their enemies with blindness.
- Jesus is like Elisha in that He's the true prophet who brings (and is) the Word of God that brings us salvation and reveals God to us.
- Jesus is like the King of Israel in that He has a feast with the Syrian army (His enemies). Christ feasts with us even though we were His enemies. Jesus graciously treats His enemies like they are friends. (This specifically foreshadows heaven where Jesus will feast with all His people who used to be His enemies.)

Connect the story:

Parallel Statements:

- The King feasts with His enemies.
- The King mercifully doesn't give His enemies what they deserve.
- The King graciously gives His enemies blessing they don't deserve.
- God opens the eyes of the blind.
- God graciously provides for and protects His people.
- God hears the prayers of His people.
- God uses a chosen man to speak His gracious words of salvation to other people.

Apply the story:

- We should rejoice because we were God's enemies and now we get to feast with Jesus, our king.
- We should be grateful for God's mercy in not giving us the punishment we deserve (specifically saving us from death apart from Him).
- We should be grateful for God's grace in giving us incredible life we don't deserve.
- We should pray with hope because we know God hears and cares about His people.
- We should spend time with Jesus our King because He's invited us to feast and abide with Him.
- We should pray for our friends and neighbors because God opens the eyes of the blind.

Who needs this story?

- People who don't believe God hears them when they pray.
- People who believe their sin is too bad for God to save them.
- People who are self-righteous and think they need to work to earn God's love, rewards, invitation to His feast, etc.
- People who don't know that grace leads to repentance and transformation. After receiving gracious treatment, these Syrians stop warring against God and His people.
- People who deal with anxiety, shame, fear of God, etc. because they don't know how merciful and gracious God is.
- People who rebel and war against God because they don't know how good He is.