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***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
God is Powerful***
2 Kings 4:1–7
February 18, 2018, Leora Sawatzky

Typically the audience I think about while I study God's word and prepare my heart to share what God gives me, are between the ages of 2 and 12. Looking around, I can see that this audience is a little taller than my usual.

What I have discovered over time, is that what and how we learn, doesn't really change that much. In keeping with my skill set, we are going to follow a thread through one story from scripture, see what it tells us about who God is and what he is like and then look at how it applies to our own hearts. It may seem simpler and deviate from the ways you might be used to hearing a sermon, but **my prayer is that God will use this message to get to a soft part of your heart today that needs to hear this simple message.**

For the last several months we all have been looking at and through history. His-Story. God's story. The one he has written and is writing through us even today. Every story is connected to a bigger and greater story. From the beginning, to the present, and into the future, God is writing his story into our world and more importantly into our hearts.

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God is up to something. He has been right from the beginning and continues to be to this day.

God is leading us to the wonder of who he is through the unveiling of his character in history. What I will be unpacking about God this morning, is that he is powerful.

A question I have been pondering this week while preparing for this message is, "Why do we love the stories about God's power on display so much?"

We, especially in children's ministry, have a highlight reel that we like to play of Bible stories. We like to tell and hear the stories of God's great power. Like when he opened up the Red Sea and made dry land for the Israelites to pass through, like when David beat Goliath, like when Paul and Silas broke out of jail, like when the walls of Jericho came crumbling down. Do we ever love stories about God's power.

The problem I have been running into in my personal life lately, is that in order to see God's power, we first have to have a known need. We need to have an obvious broken part of us or an insurmountable obstacle in front of us that would require God's power. Now that's all fine and well when it's some one else's story, but what happens when it's me who needs God's power to be displayed? Not one of us want to have that terrifying feeling of being trapped by a sea on one side and an army on the other. No one wants to be intimidated by a bully or be put into jail or even attempt the impossible.

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Seeing God's Power and Needing God's Power are two different things.

We are heading into one of the best spots of scripture where we get to see God's power on display. 1st & 2nd Kings have so many God moments that we are not going to be able to fit into our time together today. I highly recommend that you take the time to go back and read these two books. God is up to something throughout history and you don't want to miss out on the truth of who he is.

Where we meet up here is in 2 Kings 4. Israel has been established as a nation in the land God had promised Abraham, then Isaac and then Jacob and eventually the whole nation of Israel. God has proven himself as a Promise Keeper. He has shown himself as a provider and so much more. God is continually revealing who he is and that he is trustworthy. He will do what he says he will do.

At this point, the kingdom of Israel has been divided into two nations, Judah and Israel, each ruled by a king. The kings of Israel and Judah prove to be (as God predicated) faulty and sinful, leading the people away from God. They built and worshiped other gods, they married women from other nations, who brought their idols worshipping ways with them to Israel. Many of the kings incorporated the worship of idols and attempted to keep their relationship with the God of their ancestors (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) at the same time. This does not go well for them.

Looking back, we can see why. God had made a covenant with Israel. The covenant was that they would be His people and He would be their God. In Exodus 34, God speaks to Moses with a message for the Israelite nation before they enter the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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Exodus 34:9–14 (NLT)

⁹ And he said, “O Lord, if it is true that I have found favor with you, then please travel with us. Yes, this is a stubborn and rebellious people, but please forgive our iniquity and our sins. Claim us as your own special possession.”

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¹⁰ The Lord replied, “Listen, I am making a covenant with you in the presence of all your people. I will perform miracles that have never been performed anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the Lord—the awesome power I will display for you.

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¹¹ But listen carefully to everything I command you today. Then I will go ahead of you and drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ¹² Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped.

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¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. ¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you.

Can you guess what Israelites have done while living in the land? They didn't drive out all the other nations (in fact they intermarried with them), they didn't tear down all the pagan altars, they didn't smash all their sacred pillars and they didn't cut down all the Asherah poles. Instead, they added worshipping other gods, while still attempting to worship the one true God. Perhaps they thought if one God was good, why not add more. This is not how it works. God is the one true God and he, as he himself states is “a jealous God who is jealous about his relationship with you.”

At this point in history, the kingly leadership of Israel have turned away from God and have led many of the people of Israel away from God - but God in his faithfulness, continues to raise up men and women of faith.

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God is up to something and he is showing the world who he is and what he is like. He is patient. He is trustworthy. He keeps His promises. He is just. He is right. He is forgiving. He is faithful.

What is true about God, is that he is always at work, even when we don't see it or feel like it. He is continually working out his plan.

By 2 Kings 4, the nation of Israel is a mess. God, in keeping with his promises, allowed other nations to attack, crops are refusing to grow and the kingdom is in a falling apart. What they need is someone to rescue them - (And a little clue about that —> **that's** what God is up to. He is all about redemptive love

that rescues us from the mess we are in here on earth. He proves that this is true when Jesus comes to earth as a man. But that's skipping ahead in the story and you'll have to come back (or read ahead for yourselves) to hear that whole story. Just know that what God is up to, is saving us from our sins and giving us a way to have a relationship with him.)

Elisha and a group of prophets of God are fighting an uphill battle of proclaiming truths about God to the nation that doesn't want anything to do with God, unless it is about his blessing. The prophets are teaching about God, and living out truth about God in a land where their teaching is falling mostly on ears and hearts that don't want to listen.

It is during this time that a widow of a fellow prophet comes to Elisha. She is broken. She is desperate, and she is stuck. Her husband has died, she has two sons and so much debt that the creditor is going to take her two sons and sell them as slaves to pay off the debt.

She goes to Elisha, I don't know what her tone sounded like, but these are the words she spoke.

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2 Kings 4:1 (NLT)

1 ... “My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the Lord. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves.”

The weight, the pain, the hurt, the frustrations, the questions this woman would be feeling. Where is this powerful God now?

Let's slip off our shoes for a minute and slip hers on. What does she know about God? She is a part of a community that teaches about God and lives a life that is honouring to God. And yet - here she is, without a husband, with a boat load of debt and two sons about to be taken away from her.

Her life is fractured, it's shattered and it's too much for her to hold. The things that seemed so true about God in the good days, seem so much harder to believe today. She knows that God is provider, for he has given this land to Israel. Yet her experience right in this moment, is the opposite of that. She is experiencing loss, debt and fear. How do you move with that weight on you? How do you reach for the truth about God, when what you're experiencing doesn't feel like that is true?

This is Elisha's response to her and it's very simple:

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“What can I do to help you?” Elisha asked (2 Kings 4:2a)

A simple question, but I love that he doesn't leave it there. If you have ever been in crisis before, you might remember that often when someone asks “How can I help” or “Let me know if you need anything” the last thing you have space for in your brain is actually formulating a plan of action of how people can help. That's why you have thrown your life line out, that's why you're telling people “I'm sinking”.

Elisha follows up with a more specific question:

“Tell me, what do you have in the house?” (2 Kings 4:2b)

Another simple, but more specific question that leads to a God-given solution to her problem. It's not complicated, but it certainly will require a God who is Powerful and able to do hard things that no one else can do.

“Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil.” (2 Kings 4:2c)

Nothing at all. She has sold all the she has, she has nothing left to give, sell, eat, live off of - she is all out! She has nothing. She is empty. Except... for a flask of olive oil.

God can work with this one thing she has left, but it is going to require something that maybe she hasn't thought of or had the courage to do yet.

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2 Kings 4:3–4 (NLT)

3 And Elisha said, “Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. 4 Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled.”

The path out of this hard and broken place required a few things,

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It required:

- being aware and honest about her brokenness
- being vulnerable and asking for help
- being open and honest with friends and neighbours about what was going on
- trusting that our God is enough, that we can trust him.
- Believing that he is a healing, powerful God that can do hard things that no one else can do
- Make space to take the next right step.

This widow had some choices. Does she trust this man of God, break down the barriers and expose her brokenness or does she continue to hide, hoping that it will go away or that maybe there could be another way?

Let's find out:

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2 Kings 4:5–7 (NLT)

5 So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another.

6 Soon every container was full to the brim! “Bring me another jar,” she said to one of her sons.

“There aren’t any more!” he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing. 7 When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, “Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what is left over.”

This widow was in the spot no one likes to be in. The one needing God's Power. The one admitting she is broken and needy. When she did, God's power showed up in a big way. He used her brokenness to show her that he loves her, he cares about her every need, and he is powerful.

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Each one of us has our own broken and needy parts of us. We, like this widow, need to bring our broken, empty selves to a powerful God, who is able to heal, who is able to do hard things that no one else can do.

The widow is playing the role that none of us want to play in the "God is Powerful" story. The needy one. The one who needs God's power. We like to see God's power, but we don't want to have to need it. Because that means that we are broken and need help. When it comes down to it, none of us want to be in the position of needing to see God's power the way this widow does. It means - I'm not enough. I'm broken and I need help.

Which is the truth. God continued to show the world that we are broken and need help. We cannot be made whole without him. We need his plan to rescue us from sin, death and brokenness. And his plan for that has always been through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

There is a problem most human beings have when it comes to our brokenness. We like to try and keep it secret that we all are in need of God's power. It might vary, but each one of us carries with us pieces that are too broken for us to heal, to fix or move on with. But often, something gets in the way from us ever expressing it - until it gets too late. Until the lights go out, until our health leaves us bed ridden, until we can't even recognize ourselves from the person once were.

I am here today to say that I am a person in need of a Powerful God.

Dylan and I carry a weight that is too heavy for us to bear alone. The broken piece for Dylan and me is the weight of infertility. Our broken, shattered selves that we carry around with us, is the pain and longing for children to fill our lives. We have prayed, begged God, seen specialists and are waiting for the God who heals, to heal us.

I do not want to be the needy person. My pride does not want me to need a powerful God. One who can hold me together and can be my everything.

We would have no need for a powerful God without our pain and brokenness. If we could fix our pain on our own, we would have no need for God.

We all need a God that is powerful. We just need to admit that we need him. But that's hard because being in the role of the broken person is the part that none of us want to play - but we all do. All of us are broken. Not one of us is whole and we all need our powerful God. Our powerful God meets us in our pain and in our brokenness.

This side of heaven, we will all suffer with our broken pieces. Not one of us will be whole. Jesus came to heal the sick and the brokenhearted and he did. Yet we live in the tension of already and not yet. Problem already solved and still waiting for perfection in heaven.

Because of that tension, we need to embrace that there is a space to understand God in our suffering. We want to cling to the loving God, the forgiving God, the God of blessings, but when life isn't what we plan or thought it would be - what do we do with God then? Have we created space for us to find God and be near him in our suffering and pain? We want him to erase our suffering to take it away from us, we only want to see his power in a certain way. When we don't see his power demonstrated in the ways we want - what do we do with him then?

In my story, I often wonder where this powerful, healing God is. I wonder why God has yet do something that he is so capable of doing. I wonder why God has put this deep rooted, natural desire within me to be a mother and then allow my story to be written this way. Where is this God full of power in my story?

These are really big hard questions! Really big, really hard. You probably have some really big hard questions too. We all have our own brokenness that we hold and try to deal with it. Some hide it, some stare at it for days on end unable to live fully, some take it out and look at it every now and again, some pretend like it's not there, and some people take the time to learn to bring their brokenness to Jesus and allow him to speak life into your heart over your brokenness.

Honest moment here: my preferred methods of dealing with my brokenness are to 'shove it down, pretend like it's not there,' and 'do more'. I famously bring my heavy heart to Jesus, and walk away sneaking it back into my pocket to bring it with me. Never really taking the time to let it heal, because healing takes time, a lot of time.

God is powerful. God heals brokenness, however, on this side of eternity, it isn't always a miraculous 'more olive oil pouring out of the jar moment'.

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Our Powerful God may want us to sit with him a while, by a gentle stream and teach us new rhythms of an easier way to face this brokenness. Not to push it away, not to stay with it forever, but to let God be God and be present with us in our brokenness.

We all need a Powerful God to save us. We are incapable of saving ourselves. We, as Christ followers, like to say that - we know that in our heads, but how many of us don't live like that? How many of you, like me, are trying to muscle your way through life? Lifting heavy brokenness and carrying it around with us?

God knew how broken the widow would be and what she would need. God knows how broken I am and what I need. God knows how broken you are and knows what you need.

God has shown me what my next steps are going to be for this next season. He knows how my brokenness is limiting my relationship with him and limiting my relationships with others. God knows how the light inside of me is slowing fading to a flicker. And because of that and definitely because I was willing to open up about my hurt heart to those who are close to me and love me, they were able to recommend some next steps for me.

I need to make space for grief. Infertility is so very hard to grieve fully and it's ongoing. I never make space for it, because it's too painful and too hard to explain to others.

I need to make space for me to sit with God without it being a part of my job, but because I want a relationship with him as my Father, not my boss.

So I will be taking some time off work at CRBC to do these things. To heal from burnout and to learn to grieve well. I will be gone for at least 8 weeks, but possibly longer. Healing takes time and I need to allow myself the time to let God do the hard work in my heart that needs to be done.

Those are my next steps with my brokenness. You are on a different journey. You have your own brokenness, your own weight that is too heavy for you to carry. My prayer is that you will find a way to bring your broken self to our Powerful God and allow him to be with you in your sufferings.

He has a bigger picture that I know nothing about.

I so badly want to wrap this sermon up in a nice bow with a beautiful box and pretty flowers. *For those of you who know me, that's not how I usually give gifts anyway, the gift is often thoughtful, but rarely is the packaging nice..*

It has been my experience with life so far, most of us don't have neat boxes to put our messy lives into. Many of us are walking around with chronic pain, missing loved ones on earth, fighting cancer, unable to hold the child conceived because it died before we got to hold it, looking for the life we dreamed of that has yet come, our lives hold no bows, no ribbons, no neat box, just a whole lot of mess.

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This is why we need a Powerful God. A Powerful God to hold us when life hurts, a Powerful God to save us from our sins, a Powerful God to sit with in our sufferings.



**Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
God is Powerful
2 Kings 4:1-7
Week of February 18, 2018**

Objective of this study: To learn to be more open with God about our weaknesses and allow him to be our powerful Father.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 63:1-8** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Why do we love the stories about God's power so much? Which is your favourite?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word/Work (60-90 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read 2 Kings 4:1-7.
3. Describe the various roles/characters in this story.

Sermon quote: "**God is leading us to the wonder of who he is through the unveiling of his character in history.**"

4. What does this story reveal about God's character?

Sermon quote: "**Seeing God's power and needing God's power are two different things.**"

5. When have you seen God's power? And when have you needed God's power?
6. What are your feelings and responses when you are in the "widow's role" of needing God to be powerful for you?

Sermon quote: "**Our Powerful God may want us to sit with him awhile ... to let God be God and be present with us in our brokenness.**"

7. Have you ever experienced this? What was it like, sitting with God in your brokenness? This is a scary but important thing.

Prayer

8. Spend the rest of the time sharing and praying for each other about ways you would like God to be powerful in your life and in your heart.

1. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is and what he has done. Focus on being grateful. Pray about the things you discussed in the study.
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
 - A. Praise God that he met all our needs financially last year.
 - B. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
 - C. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
 - D. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
 - E. **Our missionary of the month:** Aaron and Julie Gole - Camp Homewood
 - F. **Our missionary of the week:** Nadeem & Jamilla Qazi in Pakistan
 - G. **Local CR church:** Discovery Community Church: Pastor Larry and Sharon Martin