**Sunday, September 20th, 2020**

**2ND Kings 4:1-7**

The missionaries were only fifteen miles from the African village

          where they planned to spend the night.

They were making good time and would easily arrive before dark.

But as they started across the narrow log-and-dirt bridge straddling the steep gully,

          the car gave a violent lurch and came to an abrupt stop.

"What was that?" the children cried.

Terry looked down into the deep draw below.

          "I think we've gone through the bridge," she said. She was right.

As Martin cautiously got out of the car he saw that the rear wheel

          had plunged through the rotten timbers up to the axle.

Terry took the three kids back to solid ground.

Carefully Martin jacked up the car, intending to fill the hole,

          then let the rear wheels back down and drive off.

But searching the barren landscape produced nothing but small twigs and pebbles. They would simply fall through the hole.

There were no rocks, or logs, or anything else big enough to plug the hole.

Behind them were many miles of empty bush.

All afternoon they had met only one car on the winding dirt track

          they were following in this little traveled district of Uganda.

They were alone, in big trouble, and they had nothing to help them out of danger.

Thunderclouds were building up over the Nile,

          and heavy rains would soon be upon them

Complete darkness would envelop them before long.

They couldn't spend the night in the car for fear the rest of the bridge would go. They couldn't stay out of the car - this was lion country.

A mile back they had passed a fresh hippo carcass.

And so, in this emergency they did the only thing they could do:

          They turned to God for help.

The five of them gathered together and prayed.

They asked God what to do. They thanked him for his help ahead of time.

Then they simply waited confidently and expectantly for his answer.

Before long Martin stood up, the answer had come, simple and perfect.

He got out the spare tire and slipped it beneath the jacked-up wheel.

It straddled the hole exactly.

He let the car back down and with the children cheering,

they drove off the bridge.

They made it to the village just in time.

Along with the darkness of night came the first wave

          of a driving tropical rainstorm.

The woman in this morning's reading was facing a disaster also.

Her husband had died.

She owed money to his creditor.

She had no money and the creditor

          was going to take her two boys as slaves to pay off her debt.

She turned to Elisha for help.

When he asked her what she had in her house,

          she told him she had nothing at all.

But she did have something – she had a small jar of olive oil.

Elisha told her to ask her neighbors for empty jars – and not just a few –

          she was to collect all she could find.

The woman did as instructed even though it seemed senseless.

Then she started to pour oil into the empty jars and the oil kept flowing until all the jars were full.

She was able to sell some to pay off all her debts,

          and she had enough left over so she and the children could live.

We often find ourselves in serious difficulty and can find no way out.

We don't have what we need to fix the trouble.

We believe we have nothing – nothing at all.

We don't have the money, or the time, or the tools, or the skills to fix the problem.

However, like the missionaries in Africa, and the woman seeking help from Elisha,

          we discover we do have what is needed if we seek God's help.

Sometimes we do not notice what we have,

          or we do not believe that what we have can be important.

But nothing is too small to make a big difference in our lives.

Nothing is too small for God to work with and make it extraordinary.

That small thing which we dismiss as useless or unimportant,

          can be the solution to our problem when we ask for God's help.

The missionaries asked God what to do.

They thanked him for his help ahead of time.

Then they simply waited confidently and expectantly for his answer.

Whenever we are in a rough spot, we can thank God for his help in advance.

Ask him what you should do.

Then wait confidently and expectantly for his answer.

and see how God intervenes.

God loves each one of us.

He is concerned about even the smallest of details in our lives.

We think we have nothing, and yet God has already given us so much.

God tells us to feed the hungry, clothe those who are cold,

          encourage one another, build one another up,

          comfort the sick and grieving, and help our neighbors.

But how often do we hesitate, thinking:

“I don't have anything, I don't have enough, I can't.”

But with God's help, we discover we can do amazing things,

          with the little we have.

It is really all about seeing things from God's point of view.

When it seems as if we have nothing, we discover how much God has given us.

We might not have much,

          but we can offer a few words of encouragement or comfort,

          or simply a listening ear to someone who is lonely or struggling,

          a few moments of time, or a helping hand.

When we thank God for all he has given us, and ask him for help,

          amazing things do happen.

AMEN