



*God's Provisions Are Always Enough*

*A sermon on 2 Kings 4:42-44*

*Sunday, October 7th, 2018 ~ 20th Sunday after Pentecost*

*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*

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[Intro] The South Teton isn't the most technical mountain in the Teton Range. In winter, however, things can get a bit dicey. Cornices, which are overhanging snow drifts and if they break lose they can crush a person, avalanches, seventy mile per hour or higher wind gusts, and whiteout conditions make the mountain a challenge for any climber. When my climbing partner, Chris, and I decided to climb the South Teton in the winter of 2011 we knew all the risks. Something happened on that climb neither of us expected. After 11 hours of climbing a winter storm rolled in. The temperature quickly dropped to minus 27, more than a foot of snow fell in less than an hour, and it was difficult to see your hand in front of your face. Despite the dangerous conditions we made it to the summit. To celebrate our accomplishment we hunkered down behind a rock shaped like a shark's fin and pulled out our food supplies for a little snack. That is when the unexpected happened. Chris grabbed all the food he had left, two small energy gels... which only had 140 calories in them. Normally he would bring 3000 calories worth of food with him for this type of climb. Stunned, he looked at me and yelled "I doubt that is enough!"

"I doubt that is enough!"

Maybe you've run out of supplies on some kind of adventure. Maybe it happened on a road trip. You had been in the car for hours so you weren't really paying attention to the gas gauge. When you zipped past the off ramp, which lead to the gas station, your heart sank a little bit because that is when you realized there wasn't much gas in the tank. With no place to turn around, you were forced to keep going. The more you drove the more concerned you became. The needle kept dropping and there were no signs for a fill station along the side of the highway. Eventually, you began to doubt that you had enough gas to get to the next station.

"I doubt that is enough."

Or, maybe, the bills have piled up as a result of unexpected car repair. Whenever my mother has car troubles, she always tells my dad she is going to get a horse, because they are reliable. (I can picture it in my mind, my mom riding down the side of the highway on a horse.) You've saved up some money but "doubt it is enough" to cover all your car expenses. Or worse yet your car breaks down and you have to get a new one. Your car repair savings fund isn't going to cut it.

[Guilt] Elisha's servant, one of the three main people in the 2 Kings 4:42-44 had some serious doubt about the supplies they had too. Elisha had just been given 20 loaves of barely bread. Now, when we hear "loaves of bread" we probably think of some loaves from the grocery store. You know the kind, all

neatly sliced and packaged in a plastic wrapper. There is an industry standard for how many slices of bread are supposed to be in each loaf, 18 slices. With some nice deli cuts and the right fixing, one loaf of bread could feed nine people. What Elisha was given wasn't anything like store bought loaves of bread. What he received was more like a dinner roll. One that had been left unwrapped on the table overnight. The 20 loaves of barely bread isn't any like what we consider to be a loaf of bread. To make matters worse, it wasn't just Elisha and the servant. There were 100 other people there with them. Those people had come over from all different places to listen to Elisha teach about God. So there were 102 people and only 20 dinner rolls of bread to feed them all, but the trouble didn't stop there. There had been a famine in the land. People hadn't had a proper meal in days. They needed more than 1/5 of a dinner roll. It would take a multi course meal to satisfy everyone.

It's no wonder then that Elisha's servant would doubt what they had been given would be enough. When Elisha told his servant "Give it to the people and let them eat" his servant replied, "How can I set this before 100 hungry people?" What they had been given didn't seem to match the reality of their situation.

We, like the servant, have our doubts, doubts about 2 gels being enough to get us off the mountain, doubt that there is enough in the tank to get us to the next gas station, or doubt that we have the money to pay for everything that needs to be fixed. Sometimes we doubt ourselves or others. Other times, our doubts are pointed at God. We doubt that what God has provided us will be enough to get us through. We doubt that God is keeping the promises God has made to us, because the world seems to be falling apart.

As a community of believers we can fall into corporate doubt too. The church takes a look at the widening gaps in the church pews and doubt that God cares about the future of the church. The church looks at its monies and doubts there will be enough for everything they want to accomplish. For us, the church, the disciples of Jesus, doubt about God can be a dangerous things. For what lies behind doubt can be lack of trust. Trust is key to every relationship, including our relationship with God. As we all well know, without trust a relationship will break down. Its true for our relationship with other people and its true for our relationship with God. Our doubts can lead us away from God, tempting us to lose trust in God. Let me be clear on one point, questioning God is a fine and right thing to do. In fact, there are many examples of people in the Bible doing just that. So feel free to turn to God with your concerns and questions. In short, questioning God, no problem. Losing trust in God, problem.

[Grace] Eventually, Elisha's servant did end up setting the bread before all those people. Amazingly, they all ate their fill, and they had some left according to the word of the Lord. It is here that we are witness to God's superabundant love. The provisions God gave fed everyone. God was faithful, no one went hungry.

The same is true today, God's provisions are always enough. We are reminded of this truth every time we come to the Lord's Table. At the table we remember and celebrate Jesus' dying and rising. In his life, death, and resurrection he won victory over death. Death is no longer the last word in anyone's life. Jesus is the first and the last word in our lives. Jesus' has broken the bonds of doubt, of sin, and set us freed to trust God. At the Lord's Table we come to know that God's provisions are always enough.

[Gratitude] How are we to respond to God for what God has given for us? Elisha shows us two different ways. First, instead of doubting God, Elisha, believed God cared from them and provided from them. He didn't get caught up in how little food they had and how many hungry people there were, or the fact that there was famine in the land. He simply trusted God. Second, Elisha shared with the others what God had provided. He could have kept the food to himself, but he didn't. When God gives to us we share it with others. Trust and sharing, that is how we respond to God.

Fortunately, for Chris, we brought with us some just-in-case food. We made it back down the mountain with only a little more drama. Hopefully you made it to the gas station without running out of gas. When it comes to God we can question God, no problem, but when questions become doubt, a lack of trust in God, that is a problem. The good news is, even when we are struggling with trusting God, God has not left us nor forsaken us. God loves us and provided for us. We know this to be true, because at the Lord's Table we see that God's provisions are always enough.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.