

## *Donkey Heads And Doves' Dung*

2 Kings 6:24-7:20

February 25, 2024

What's a donkey's favorite show? Bray Watch. What's the difference between a teeter-totter on a ranch and a donkey's grandpa? One's a yee-haw seesaw and the other is a hee-haw pee-paw. Better watch the donkey jokes. We're going to talk about donkeys a bit today. Please open your Bibles today to Old Testament book of 2 Kings 6.

Since beginning of January we've been talking about our theme for this year, the Great what? These are the marching orders Jesus gave the church. Clever arrow in the announcements scrolling. Actually, these sermons on witnessing have been something you've asked for. A few years back when we did a general survey, one of the top areas many of you requested help on was witnessing to others. Over the years we've worked on that and particularly since the first of this year, we've been working on it as well. We're going to continue to do so, God willing.

It may seem a little strange to look into the Old Testament to find a message about evangelism. But this is one of the best. To set the stage, listen as I read 2 Kings 6:24-25 Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. 25 There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels.

The city of Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel and the year is about 900BC. Ben-Hadad, from what is now Syria, has come over and surrounded the city to starve it out. No one could go in or out and supplies of food and water are running low. It was a common method of warfare and is still used today. And it was working. The situation got really bad. People were so hungry they were eating everything. They were eating donkey heads and paying equivalent of over \$350 for one. When's the last time you roasted a donkey head in your smoker? If donkey was that expensive, imagine a pound of beef. They were also paying over \$20 for a ½ pint of seed pods, although the footnote says dove's dung. Dove poop. \$40/pint. Perhaps to be used for fuel, but more likely for food. I'll take the donkey head. Even worse, the verses that follow tell us of two mothers arguing over whose child they would eat first. Things are really bad.

And the King, probably Jehoram, blamed Elisha as is often the case. Blame the church. Blame God. Blame Christians. Although Elisha was not to blame, He spoke of deliverance. When the king came to arrest him, let's read what he said from 2 Kings 7:1 Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord says: About this time **tomorrow**, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel

at the gate of Samaria." 2 The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?" "You will see it with your own eyes," answered Elisha, "but you will not eat any of it!"

Elisha prophesies divine deliverance and a dramatic influx of food and a corresponding drop in prices. Flour will sell for almost of nothing. But the prophecy is too fantastic, the king's right hand man can't believe it. Say doubt. This was too impossible. No way could this ever happen! And Elisha pronounced judgment on him for doubting God. Friend, stop doubting and believe! It's often when things are worst that God works most mightily. But we may not benefit from it if we've doubted God's ability to do so.

We live in desperate times today. Look around. Gas is over \$3 gallon, Kids are killing police officers, teenagers are shooting people at random at super bowl parties, children are being exploited and trafficked, fentanyl is killing people and drugs are destroying others, husbands and wives are mistreating and killing each other, horrible things are happening. And many in intelligence warn us it's going to get worse. People are desperately hungry spiritually today. They are starving and willing to eat anything, even lies. Some say there is no hope, that God's not big enough, that even He can't save us. Beware of doubting God!

Ok, forget those inside the city for a minute. Just outside are some lepers, some outcasts. Let's see what they do. Vs 3 Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, "Why stay here until we die? 4 If we say, 'We'll go into the city'-the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die."

5 At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, not a man was there, 6 for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" 7 So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.

8 The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp and entered one of the tents. They ate and drank, and carried away silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.

"We're starving. Things can't get any worse. Let's just go over to the enemy and see what happens. We're going to die anyway." Friends, this is us. We are the four lepers outside the city wall. Like them, we're all afflicted with the disease of sin that makes us ugly and hungry and unfit for God's kingdom. We're all doomed to die. And

in desperation, to no credit of our own, with nothing else to lose and knowing we were hopelessly bound for hell, we tried Jesus. Like those lepers, we stepped out in faith and He miraculously saved us!

Not only are these lepers saved, suddenly they're filthy rich! From abject poverty and starvation that afternoon to extreme wealth that night with all the food they could eat and fine clothes they could wear. Talk about rags to riches! Is that not what happens to us when we come to Jesus? We go from wallowing in our sins to rejoicing in God's grace. He satisfies our hungry souls and gives us new clean clothes. His blood takes our pain and guilt and gives us joy and gladness. From extreme poverty to unbelievable wealth. From no hope to certain blessing. And everyone said? These lepers are a snapshot of you and I!

And they're in high cotton! They begin to hoard it for themselves. Eating and stashing, eating and stashing! "This is too good to be true! Mine all mine! Never mind that thousands are starving ½ mile away eating dove dung and donkey heads, I've got all I need, I'm sitting pretty." Do we ever do that? We meet Jesus and He miraculously turns our lives around, and too often, we keep it to ourselves. We begin reading and learning about God and getting rich spiritually yet we keep the Bible to ourselves. We go from Scripture to Scripture as they went from tent to tent amassing great spiritual blessing. But we fail to share it with others.

But then, praise God, their consciences got the better of them. Vs 9 Then they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." Guilt is not a bad thing. It can be misused, but if we're doing wrong, we need to feel guilty that we might confess, repent, and go God's way. If we feel guilty for not witnessing, don't sweep it under the rug or excuse it. Ask forgiveness and start doing it! These four lepers feared God enough that it motivated them to change. They were scared **not** to tell the good news. Oh that we might have that same fear!

Note what they said, "This is a day of Good news" Say Good news. That's what the word Gospel means-good news! The KJV says it's a day of good tidings which is what the angel told the shepherds when Jesus was born! I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people! There's food in Bethlehem! (the house of bread). God was saving His people and these four lepers could either be a part of it and go with God or be selfish and stand in the way. I'm thankful they were willing to be a part of what God was doing!

But that's our choice too. Jesus gave the keys of His kingdom to us like those four lepers. Will we let anyone else in? When God sent Jesus, He sent abundant provision for all people. Are we telling others about Him? The old saying is that witnessing is simply

one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. The Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. We were all starving till someone helped us find Jesus. We need to remember what it's like to eat donkey heads and dove's dung. Will you help someone else find Him? Please don't keep Him to yourself, don't hoard Him or hide Him. It's too good a news not to share! And people are dying to hear it! We've got to get over our fear of witnessing because people around us are dying and going to hell when Jesus died so they wouldn't have to. His tent is chock full of food, gold and eternal life! If fear is a problem, confess it to God and ask the Holy Spirit for holy courage! Imagine facing God in judgment with all our banquet invitations, calendars, books, tracts still in our pockets! It would be like these four standing before Him having not shared.

What did they do? Vs 10 So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, "We went into the Aramean camp and not a man was there — not a sound of anyone — only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were." 11 The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace." The lepers shared the good news! They yelled up to the gatekeepers on the wall, "Hey there's tons of food down here!" They shared the news. What the people in the city did with it was up to them, but the lepers did their part. Are we doing ours? What people do with the good tidings is up to them. But we must tell. Later in this chapter, the king doesn't believe the news at first and many won't believe you either. Tell them anyway. Shine anyway, Salt anyway! Our job is not to make them believe, our job is to tell.

Once they found that the army had in fact fled, Vs 16, "Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a seah of flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, as the Lord had said." Talk about deflation! Supply skyrocketed to exceed the demand and people got to eat! The lepers couldn't handle all that food and wealth themselves anyway! They'd die before they got to every tent. Let's share the wealth of Jesus Christ and His free abundant salvation! There's plenty of His blood to go around! There's plenty of grace and mercy and love to go around! We can never exhaust the riches of God's abundant supply even if everyone in world got saved. Oh to see that happen! That's God's will. That not one would perish. We're to be working to accomplish His will on earth even as in heaven.

What happened as a result of the four lepers sharing their good news? Thousands and thousands of people in Samaria were saved! They didn't have to eat donkey heads and dove's poop any more. Salvation happened that day! And it still happens today when the good news is shared! Brothers and sisters, we're sitting on a gold mine! With an eternal supply! We have the Gospel of Jesus Christ! People are literally dying to know Who and what we know. We know where help is, where salvation is, how to be saved. We sometimes think no one wants to hear how Jesus saved you so we don't tell it. They do! They're starving to death ½ mile away while we feast and get fat off of God's precious word. Don't let fear of failure keep you from witnessing. Share Jesus and leave the results up to God.

So what happened to that king's assistant who doubted God's ability to save? Vs 17. Now the king had put the officer on whose arm he leaned in charge of the gate, and the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king came down to his house. 18 It happened as the man of God had said to the king: "About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria."

19 The officer had said to the man of God, "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?" The man of God had replied, "You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it!" 20 And that is exactly what happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.

Oh my bro and sisters, don't ever doubt God! There are many naysayers, some even in the church that say we can't make a difference. We can't reach the lost. They don't want to hear. God's not big enough. America will never change. Don't ever doubt God! America can change if the church begins to do her work. God has already opened the floodgates of heaven, it's up to us to tell others they're open.

In this case four people saved an entire city. We have 60 times as many people today between these two services. What kind of an impact can we have in this community and in our world? There's an old saying "Those who say it can't be done should get out of the way of those who are already doing it." We are either part of the solution or part of the problem.

The only one that can give Eternal Salvation from spiritual starvation is Jesus. And we can introduce them to Him. He can alleviate their everlasting hunger and suffering in Hell. Yell up to someone on the wall this week, tell 'em about what you've found, Who you've found. Invite them to come and see for themselves. Tell the World the message. And share God's abundant provision of salvation with others.