****

**A Day of Good News - Podcast 6**

*PLEASE NOTE: These are direct transcripts of spoken sermons.*

Good morning! A beautiful day, turn to Second Kings chapter 6. We’re going to dive into this passage and dig deeply into it. And as you’re turning there let me just say that as we finish up our worklife series this week, next week we’re going to be starting a series about the providence of God in the ordinary experiences of our life. You every wonder, “how much of what takes place in my life is actually God ordained? How much I do, is God paying attention to, and how much of what I do is just kind of coincidence? Can God really be involved in the ordinary stuff of my life?” And we’re going to spend five weeks looking at the book of Ruth, and in the book of Ruth we’re going to see how God works in the ordinary, normal, average, parts of life to do supernatural things. So, make sure you bring your bible next week; we’re going to dive in, we’re going to look deeply at the book of Ruth.

So, that’s where we’re headed, but we’re finishing up today in our worklife series. Discovering God at work. And as we finish up today with this series, I want to start with a question: have you ever really been hungry? Now, I’m not talking about the, “Oh, I wish I’d had my yogurt this morning,” hungry. I’m talking about where you were really, really hungry. I think the time in my life I was the most hungry, I did a five day fast. And when I did that five day fast it wasn’t five days of drinking the green vegetable juice, or you know five days of drinking Ensure, which one of our staff members did one time in a fast. Got more calories when he did a fast than he did normally. I mean, I went five days without any calories. And after a couple days I just started experiencing this overwhelming craving; not just hunger, but this craving to put something into my body. So, I remember one day I was walking through the kitchen and I just automatically reached over, grabbed the refrigerator, pulled it open, reached in, pulled some food, stuck it into my mouth and I was actually chewing before I went, “Woah! Fasting!” So, I remember spitting it out in the trash can, but I was just so hungry. Well, if you’ve ever been hungry you’re going to be able to relate a little bit to the story that we’re looking at here in Second Kings chapter 6.

Let’s look there. We’re going to start in verse 24, “So, sometime later Ben-Hadad, king of Arab mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid seige to Samaria.” Now, Samaria is the capital city of Israel, the ten northern tribes, and Ben-Hadad brings his entire army, they come up, they surround the entire city and look what happens. It says, “There was a great famine in the city. The siege lasted so long that a donkey’s head sold for 80 shekels of silver and a fourth of a cab of seed pods for five shekel.” Now, donkey’s heads don’t seem to be very appetizing and they’re not typically known for their large slabs of edible meat. So, when people are paying basically the equivalent of two pounds of silver, to buy a donkey’s head, or when taking about a half of a cup of seed pods; not the seeds, the pods, are buying those to eat, paying real money for that it’s a bad deal. The purpose of a siege is to keep anything from coming into the city to feed the people until you literally starve them to death. So, that’s what’s taking place in the city. It gets worse, in the next verse it says, verse 26, “As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, ‘Help me! My Lord the king!’ the king replied, ‘If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the wine press?’” In other words, he’s being very caustic and very sarcastic, “Who do you think I am? Can I invent food? Am I just, oh yeah I’ll just go to the threshing fold and I’ll bring you all you want.” Then he asked her, “’What is the matter?’ and she replied, ‘this woman who’s with me, this woman said to me give up your son so we may eat him today and tomorrow we will eat my son.’” Now, as bad as that sounds that’s not the complaint, she goes on to say, “So, we cooked my son and ate him and the next day I said to her, give up your son so we may eat him. But she had hidden him.” The woman’s not complaining about having cannibalized her own kin, what she’s complaining about is the other woman is not letting her eat that child as well. Now this is really desperate. These people are desperate, in the midst of their desperation, their starvation God is going to do an incredible miracle of salvation for the people. If you have a chance, I would encourage you to read the whole story because it’s a phenomenal story, a lot of intrigue, a lot of God doing some really interesting things.

I want to jump over to a snapshot in the middle of the story in chapter 7, we’re going to look at 4 characters and what happened to them. So, starting in verse 3 chapter 7, “Now, there were 4 men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate.” Now, leprosy was a disease back then, the people thought it was a disease that could spread by touch. It was very debilitating, basically all your extremities would turn white and crack and then fall off. And so, people with leprosy were quarantined, so these people with leprosy were sitting outside the city gates, not in the city. They’re just outside the city. They can’t be with the people but they’re experiencing the famine and they come up with some brilliant logic in the midst of their hunger. Notice what he says, “They said to each other, ‘Why stay here until we die. If we say we’ll go into the city the famine is there and we will die. 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 we die.’” That makes sense, slow death out here, fast death over there, maybe they’ll have mercy on us and feed us. So, we’ll see what happens. Verse 5 says, “At dusk they got up and they went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, not a man was there 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, king of Israel has hired the Hittites and the Egyptian kings to attack us.’ So, they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents, and their horses and their donkeys. They left the camp as it was and they ran for their lives.” So, in the middle of the night as morning’s starting to dawn, this group of soldiers who had been surrounding the city, because when you’re in siege mode you’re not in attack mode, typically you’re not very ready because all you’re doing is day after day after day waiting. And God makes this sound. So, they start to hear this sound, and what this sound is hundreds of thousands of horses and chariots and soldiers coming to attack the camp. And when they hear that they think, well the king of Samaria’s hired mercenaries, the mercenaries are on their way. We’re not prepared, run for your lives! And so, they begin to run and when they run, they leave everything behind. They leave all their tents, they leave all their food, they leave all their animals, they leave it all behind.

Now keep in mind, that when a conquering king would move through an area, every town that they sacked, they would take all the gold, they would take all the food, they would take all the garments, they would take all wine, they would take everything valuable. So, by the time they get to Samaria, this camp is loaded down with valuable stuff. Four lepers walk up and it is a ghost town. There are tents, there are animals, there’s everything but there isn’t any people. And so, what happens, the men who have leprosy in verse 8 reach the end of the camp and in one of the tents, what do you do? Well you eat and drink, so they carried away silver and gold and clothes, they went off and hid them. Then they returned and entered another tent and took some things from it, and went to another tent and took some things from it also. And then they said to each other, this is their Aha moment, “We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we’re keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let us go at once and report this to the royal palace.” So, they go and the story ends with the people in the city of Samaria coming out, and raiding the camp and having food to eat bringing all the wealth, and the supplies, and all the resources that had been captured all up and down the land, bringing that into the city. And it saved the city, and it saved all the people.

Now in the midst of that city, there’s one critical verse and its verse 9. And in verse 9, these 4 lepers have their Aha moment. You ever have one of those Aha moments? When you’re doing something and you’re rocking along, and all of a sudden, boom. Truth hits you in the face. And when truth hits you in the face, it changes everything. Now, this morning as you are here, what I want you to experience is Aha moment about your work life. Whether you’re a student, whether you’re a stay-at-home parent, whether you work in some kind of business, {whether you are working at your job search}, that you would experience an Aha moment that would change everything.

Now, what was their Aha moment? When they are in the tent, eating and drinking, and getting rich they realize that the miracle that they’re experiencing is not just a personal miracle, it’s a city-wide miracle. That the miracle that God has provided here is not just simply to get them food, the miracle that God has provided is the salvation not just of these four lepers it’s the salvation of the whole city. And it comes a moment that when they’re sitting in these tents and they’re enjoying the blessing and I’m sure that they were drinking and eating, and they probably had a food fight. Maybe even rolling around in it. And they’re putting stuff in their pockets and their hiding stuff. Then all of a sudden it hit them, God didn’t do this miracle just for four people, the magnitude of the miracle scales to the salvation of the whole city, and we know that and they don’t. And they are saved, and they are starving. This is a day of good news for us. God intends it to be a day of good news for them too. The miracle is big enough for all, it’s intended for all. And they say, we are not doing right. Boom! Aha! We’re not doing right! This day is a day of good news and we need to tell everybody. It’s bigger than us.

You know what, verse 9 says that they began to fear. It said, “Punishment will overtake us if we keep this to ourselves.” The word punishment there in Hebrew is a word that refers to divine retribution. What they’re saying is that God never intended to bless us and bless us alone, God intended to bless us and make us the messengers of blessing. And if we just keep the blessing and don’t become the messengers for the salvation of others, in other words if people go through the night and starve to death, they go through the next day and starve to death that will be our responsibility. And that made them fearful, so they went and they shared it with the city and everybody experienced the miracle of God’s salvation.

Now, let me ask you does that sink in with you at all? When God decided to redeem the world and he sent his son Jesus Christ to shed his blood for the salvation of humanity, do you believe that the miracle of the cross is big enough, its grand enough for the salvation of all people? You see, when God sent his son Jesus Christ to die, John tells us John chapter 2, it was in appreciation for the whole world. That the sacrifice of Jesus to reconcile us to God is big enough for everyone not just for a few. And so, for those of us who’ve experienced this incredible good news, we’ve been called to share it. We’ve been called to tell others. We’ve been called to take it out and let it out and get it out so other people would know, and we’re not just called to do that in church, we’re called to do that in our worklife.

So, in addition to being excellent in our work, to being ethical in our work, to being engaged with other people in our work, we’re also called to be evangelistic. To share the good news with other people and let other people know the good news. The word evangelism doesn’t mean twist arm up behind back, put foot on neck, get them to come and join your church, it doesn’t mean to make them have some kind of Christian symbol to hang up in their cubicle. That’s not what it means. **The word evangelism comes from the Greek word, which means to share or spread or communicate good news. And you know what, there’s incredible good news. That God and Jesus Christ has reconciled himself to the world, and he’s given us the ministry of reconciliation that we would go out and let people know the great news of the gospel. So why do I do that at work?** **Well let me give you four reasons why you do that at work.**

The first one is the **good news is meant to be shared**, the good news is meant to be shared. That’s why it’s given out, and in the same way these lepers found the miracle was big enough for all, we also find that the miracle of the gospel is big enough for all. All people that we come in contact with, so that the good news can go out to all. And you know what, every once in a while, I’ll run across somebody that gets that. They understand that to the core of their being, so deeply that it just seems that telling people the good news is a natural course of their life even in their worklife. I want you to meet one of those people, let’s watch Stephanie’s story.

(video clip)

“Hi, I’m Stephanie Wilkins, I’m the founder and director of First Foundations Preschool. This is our ninth year of operations and we are having a blast and watching God perform miracle after miracle every day. We are so blessed that our teachers love the Lord and have a desire to communicate that to each child. Our goal is to plant seeds, that these children will love the Lord and know him from a young age and just watch what happens in their lives. The wonderful thing that we have here is our teachers and staff work with the parents. That is so important, because working together will result in better students. The great thing is when you get to work with a parent you get to know them on different levels. Lindsey Caldwell for example, knew one of the parents and talked on and off. And she knew that she was having issues here and there and she finally got to ask her, “Do you know the Lord? Do you have a relationship? Do you have some time to hear about it?” and that day right there in the classroom she was able to lead her to Christ. One year at Christmas, of course we’re going over the Christmas story and a child goes home and tells the father the Christmas story from the version at First Foundations. And the dad said, “Oh honey, no you’ve got some facts wrong.” And so, the father went to get his bible and apparently, he had to look and when he opened it up he found that everything she said was just as the bible had said, and that his facts were rusty and it challenged him to get back into the bible so that he could be a more Godly father to this daughter.

Having a preschool under the department of human services and they make their yearly surprise stops, and so I’m sure nobody’s really happy to see them at their front door, and she’s been by our school a few times and one time she came in she says, “Stephanie, you have such a joy about you. I don’t get it.” And I first went on to tell her, anything good that you see in me, is Jesus. And she said, “But your whole staff.” And I said, we all have Jesus active in our life. I had the opportunity to give her my testimony and how I found the Lord, and another parent walked in and we were able together to tell her how easy to find salvation is and it’s for everyone. She came in that day thinking she was just going to check out our schools, to make sure we had everything we needed by law and we gave her everything she needed for eternal life. I’ve discovered God at work through the building we’re in right now. The odds against us ever having something like this are easier to win than the lottery but God is so infinite, his mercy is so good. I see him in my life, I see him give me peace over situations that I shouldn’t have peace over. I see him in the lives of my teachers, loving each other, encouraging each other, growing in their walk with the Lord. I just emailed one of my teachers last night, telling her how proud I was, how much she has grown in God, I have seen God at work through the children that touch her lives, that teach us the faith of a child. The ways that I’ve seen God at work in my life are so amazing.”

Isn’t that awesome? Isn’t that good? Hey, **when you got the good news you got to tell people about it. It’s meant to be shared.** Well some of you will say, “Well I don’t know about that though because the way I grew up, you really kind of need to keep your faith to yourself”. You know my parents were kind of that way, **the tradition we grew up in, you keep your faith to yourself. Don’t want to make anybody feel guilty or push it on anybody. You want to keep your faith to yourself. Now that would be fine if everybody was going to go to heaven.** That would be fine if everybody was going to go to heaven. **But the second reason why we share our faith in our worklife is because we know that not everyone is going to go to heaven.** I mean, **Jesus made it very clear that he was the one that came to earth to bring God’s salvation and forgiveness to people. And so, if we don’t get that message to them, and they don’t put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ their eternal destiny is in jeopardy.** So, that’s why we share our faith. How can we keep this message to ourselves? If the lepers would have said, “You know what? We got good news but that’s for everybody to discover on their own.” Would they have been culpable for the people in the city that starved? You better believe it. **We have a responsibility to share.**

In addition to that, **the third reason why we share goodness is I’m connected to Christ 24/7.** I’m connected to Christ 24/7. **What we have in our faith is a relationship with Christ and we can’t leave our relationship at home when we go into our work life.** That wouldn’t make any sense. I mean think of it this way, a pastor shared this with me one time and it was so good. He said, “Think about it this way. What if a husband came to their wife and said you know honey we’re married, okay? And when I’m at home we’re married. And I’m going to act married. But when I go to work, work is work, and home is home. At home, we’re married. But at work, we’re not married. Okay? You get that? Home is home, work is work. Married, not married. So, when I’m at work I’m not going to act married. In fact, you know, I think I’m going to leave my ring on the dashboard of the car, and I’ll put it back on when I get done with work.” And some of you would be saying, hey if that’s the way you feel just leave it off and don’t bother to come home from work. When you committed to me, you committed to me 24/7, 365. **And if we’re in a relationship with Jesus Christ, we don’t turn it off and turn it back on. We live that relationship all the time. 24/7, 365.**

**The fourth reason we share the good news is because God calls us to share the good news.** God calls us to share the good news. Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 5 verse 13, he said “You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither can men light a lamp and hide it under a bushel, but they put it on a lamp stand so it gives light to the whole house.” He goes on to say, “Therefore let your light so shine before people that they might see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.” We have been called to let people know, just like those lepers to let them know that there is a huge miracle and the miracle is salvation. That they can have peace in Jesus Christ, and that God loves them. And we need to share that.

Well, how do share the good news? What are some ways that we can share the good news at work? Well let me give you several of them that I’ve learned over the years and some of them from you guys. And some of you are really excellent at this. **The first one is through our character and that means being excellent, being ethical, and being engaged with people. When people see that, they see that we work hard and do our best, that we’re ethical in our behavior, that we care about people, that we get involved in their lives, when people see that you know what’s going to happen?** **They’re going to ask a why question.** You know, just like the person from health and human services asked Stephanie “Hey, why are you guys happy to see me? Nobody else is happy to see me. Why are you guys happy to see me?” What’s the answer you would give when someone says, “why are you the way you are?” now let me tell you the wrong answer, **the wrong answer is to say, “well I’m a Christian.” As if you’re not. Don’t tell people what you believe, tell people what you’re related to. Don’t tell people, well you know I have standards, I have principles, I have rules, they come out of my Christian faith. It’s not about getting them to understand that you believe something, it’s getting them to understand that you have a relationship with the God of heaven. That you’re connected with Jesus Christ** the son and you’re in a loving relationship with him, and you know that they can find life by loving him too. Don’t communicate in words that stereotype people about belief system. Communicate about the living relationship that you have with Jesus. Tell people about your savior.

Number two, **give information that has helped you**, or information that has helped me. That’s one of the best ways to share the good news with people, is if you’ve experienced help in some way, then you can share with people. Give that to people. **Maybe you’ve gone through some marriage issues, and you’ve read a book along the way or you’ve taken a class that’s helped you share that with other people. Maybe you had some doubts about the faith and you wondered who Jesus is or you wondered, is the bible really reliable? And you’ve done some study and some research, share with them what you have gained from. Don’t say, well here’s a book, read it.** Or, here’s some research go do it. What you’re saying to people is listen, this has helped me, let me help you. Maybe, when you get stressed out you listen to praise music and you’ve got a favorite CD and you’re seeing a coworker all stressed out, to say to them “you know what, when I get stressed out it really helps me to be reminded that God’s in control and I listen to this music and I bought a CD for you. I want you to try this, let me know how it goes.” If you take the things that God is doing in your life, the resources that’ll benefit you, the things that are helping you and you simply share those as a matter of course, you’re going to open up all kinds of conversations to share the good news, and probably stay out of trouble with HR in the process.

**Number three is invitations to events.** Invitations to events. There are all kinds of things that are going on that you can invite people to. The people in your work life, if you’re a student our student ministry has all kinds of stuff going on in the city to invite people to. It’s actually amazing how much is available, we’ve got a lot of stuff here, inviting someone to a sermon series on Sunday, like the women’s Christmas event that’s coming up, there’s a great opportunity. But there are things that are taking place in your work place to look around and see. Just with very little effort, I found out that there’s at least nine bible studies that’re meeting on the campus of Dell every week. Now my guess is there’s probably 30, but I’m aware of nine of them, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday that’re meeting. Meeting on the campus where people are actually studying the bible. My guess is, there’s probably some of those in the work world where you work. In addition to that, there are 8 going on in the capital complex, every week. Eight different studies that’re taking place that you could invite someone to. Priority Associates is a ministry in town that brings in speakers, business people, leaders, to share their testimony over a lunch. There are myriads of things that you can invite people to get the gospel to people.

**The fourth way, is seasonal or personal celebration.** Seasonal or personal celebrations. I know of people who basically own their own business and they have a Christmas party every year. Invite the staff to the Christmas party, and there somebody shares a Christmas story. And that’s what they do every year, they share the Christmas story, and the owner will share their testimony; this is what motivates me, this is what’s meaningful to me, this is my reason for it. People are very open for seasonal celebrations, look for opportunities, Christmas, Easter, other times where you can take advantage of an opportunity to invite people, participate. Personal celebrations are also powerful, most people if you were to go to most people at work and say to them, “I’m going to be baptized this week, and you’re really important to me, and this is a really important step for me. I would love for you to come and attend my baptism and then afterwards we’re going to have a party and I’d like you to be a part of that.” There are very few people who’re going to turn you down. The same thing for your child dedication, my child’s getting dedicated, this is a huge deal in my life I would love for you to come and be part of that, would you come? We’re going to have a party afterwards, we’d love to have you. Kids graduating from high school, a 16th birthday, a promotion, a transition, what’re the personal things that’re taking place in your life where you can invite people in and then share with them why this is so significant. Don’t ambush them. Just talk from your life, what’s going on with you.

**The final, number five how we share the good news is what we call Awe Factor Experiences.** Awe Factor Experiences. There are things that transcend the normal day-to-day course of life that open up people to the gospel in new ways. Generally, it’s transcendent in nature, it’s helping, the best side of yourself. We take people to the border towns of Mexico, about every 8 weeks. We do medical work down there, we do relief down there, we share. That would be a great opportunity to take a coworker. You say, “well don’t they have to be a Christian?” well they don’t have to be a Christian to clean up medical supplies. And in the midst of seeing that we’ve got all kinds of people going to help, it creates all kinds of opportunities for big discussions about meaning and purpose in life. Why we do this. Why we exist. When the city of Marble Falls had their big flood, we took a whole bunch of people from here and went out there to run chain saws and clean up the place. Just think, if everybody took two coworkers out there. You don’t have to be a Christian to run a chainsaw. But those are experiences to get people involved in, that wouldn’t normally engage in this kind of conversation. In addition to that, many of you have these kinds of helpful things taking place in your workplace. And if your office is thinking about going to down to clean up Zilker Park, why don’t you go with them? Being there, being part of that, because there you can demonstrate that you care too, and you can build connections with people as well. You see, God has good news, and he’s revealed it to us. And he wants us to get that good news out so other people can experience it as well. And we call that evangelism and we do it through our lives. Now as we wrap up the series and we come to a conclusion, I want us to do something very, very special. And in order to do this very, very special, you need something in your hand, so reach in your bulletin and pull out these two cards. If you don’t have a bulletin, we want everyone to get one of these, students, adults, everybody, husbands, and wives, raise your hand, we got people around the place that would be happy to get one of these in your hand. Everybody gets one of these. So, hold your hand up, got a bunch of people down here in the front on this side. Come on down, just keep your hand up, be patient. As you get these two things out, one of them is your work life challenge for week six, we’re not going to go over this together but you can take the challenge, blog about it. Go read those blogs, there are some really cool things that are taking place.

The one I want you to focus your attention on is this card here, so get this card in your hand. Now let me relay one more right here, she’s coming, she’s got you. As you hold this card in your hand let me relate my experience to your experience and see if this works for you. There was a time when I was beginning my ministry, which by the way is my worklife, where I sat with a group of elders and I said to them, I want to commit my life to your work. To the work of God. I want to commit my life to the work of God, I’m giving you my time, I’m giving you my life, I’m giving my life to the work of God. And those elders laid hands on me and they prayed a prayer of commissioning for me. That was my ordination, they were ordaining me to give my work life to God, to the gospel ministry. We know, that God is not just interested in my work life, we know that God’s interested in all of our work life. God doesn’t just work in pastors, God works in all of our lives, regardless of what you’re doing. And that’s what we’ve been learning from the word all week, and so what I’m going to do is I’m going to give you a chance to be ordained as an ambassador of Jesus Christ so that you can live out your worklife in whatever it is you do, you can experience that same commissioning in your life that I experienced when those men laid hands on me and dedicated my life to God. And here’s how we’re going to do this. If you can believe and you can say, I want my work, I really want my worklife to be a reflection of my relationship with Jesus Christ, no sacred or secular split. I want my work to be God honoring and I’m going to strive for that and I’m going to seek that, what I want you to do is an act of commitment, is just put your name on here, and we’ll have a minute in just a moment where we’ll bow our heads and let you think about this. Sign your name on here if you’ve got a specific prayer request about your worklife. If you want to write that on there as well, in just a minute we’re going to have a time where you’ll have the opportunity as an act of worship, and act of dedication to come up and place that card on the alter here. As an act of saying, “Yes, God I want you to do it in me. I want you to take my life, this is my commissioning.” And after we sing a song of worship, I’m going to say a prayer of ordination and ordain you to the ministry of Jesus Christ in your field, in your work life. Now as you write your prayer request on there, I promise you I’ll pray for every single one of you for what your prayer is, so if you leave them here I’ll get them and there’s a tear off there to remind you of this day. You can tear that off and stick it in your bible to remind you that you work for God in God in whatever field you work in. So right now, I’m going to ask you to bow your heads and just think before God, go ahead and sign the card if your commitment is, and then if you feel led, right from your seat to the balcony just get up make your way to the front, leave it here as we play some music, we’re going to sing a song together, keep coming. Until everybody that’s felt like they were led to do that, does that and then I’ll pray a prayer of commissioning. So, let’s just bow our heads together, and let’s just ask God, “God, will you give me the courage to give my life, my work life to you?”