

THE AXE HEAD THAT FLOATED + + +

PASTOR GREG GRIFFITH

Good morning, Church. You know, I love it because we get to outdo one another with brotherly affection, and we rejoice. I will say it again. Let us rejoice. Who is rejoicing? Because you're in a house of the Lord today. Come on. Amen. Yeah, it's just so great to be with God today and to be with you today and together to rejoice in what God is doing in our lives.

And I have to make a confession to you today. As we're thinking about all the rejoicing that we're doing, I have to tell you an honest truth. I'm a hypocrite. I really am. Nothing annoys me more in life than when I see people or hear my family or someone in our household or if I'm at a party and some friends are doing when people are like, I can't find my keys or I've lost my wallet or where are my sunglasses? Like, I get so riled up on the inside of that because I am a person who has direct order and has a place for every single thing. And every single thing has a place. And so, like, I've never lost my keys. I've never wondered where my wallet was like I know exactly where I put them.

I have a bowl that I put my keys in and I have a place for my wallet. And so when I hear people do that, like I've learned like on the inside, I'm kind of going, well, maybe you're not responsible enough to have keys in the first place and all the things. And then I have all that angst that goes inside. So but I've learned I just keep that quiet to myself, but I don't help them at all. Like I won't. I'll just go, I don't know where they are. You know, I don't even know.

Well, I'm a hypocrite because I've actually become a person who loses things, not my keys, not my wallet. Matter of fact, not things, just a thing. I've never been a person who likes jewelry. I don't wear a necklace. I don't wear bracelets. And I had never worn rings.

And when we got married, when Lori and I got married 19 years ago, I still remember talking to her and saying, one of the things I'm not sure about is a wedding ring. Like, I don't like wearing rings. I don't know what it's going to be like. And she's like, well, I don't know if you really have to have one. I said, no, no, no, I want one. I just don't, I don't know what it will be like. And so she said, well, don't get one that's too expensive then. And I said, so I went and I found a ring, you know, to show my love for my wife.

And it was a perfect ring. It had little little little dimples in it. So it reminded me also of golf and how much I love golf. And I thought this is a great ring. So I got that. And for 13 years, I did well with that ring. I had never lost it. I don't wear it regularly. So I would take it off every night and put it in the bowl where my keys and my wallet and everything goes. And I would take it off when I would go work out, because if I wiped my head, I would scratch my head. And so I took it off once in a while. And sometimes I'd forget to put it back on.

And I don't know what happened, but I got here to Omaha and I don't, I don't know where, I don't know how. But like a few days went by and I was like, oh, I'm not wearing my ring. Where's my ring? So I looked in the bowl. It wasn't there. And I was like, where? And I thought and I was like, where would I

have taken this off? And I searched my car. I searched my office. I searched the house. I searched inside of all the cracks in the crevices and all of our chairs and found everything disgusting except for my wedding ring.

And so I said, Lori, I lost my wedding ring. And she was like, oh, she's like, well, that was kind of — and I said, I know I just feel terrible. And she goes, well, don't buy an expensive one to replace it. And I said, I won't. I said she said, because maybe — and I said, yeah, I won't.

So I bought another one and again reminded me of my love. I wanted to have it. And then I like to have it also share things I love. And so this one was made out of a whiskey barrel. And so it was really cool. I loved it and had that.

And I remember where I lost that one. It was about a little over a year ago. I was in a hotel room at an event and I went to go work out because I was early before the event. I put my ring down. It was one of those rooms as NBC suites where it had a living room and then a bedroom. And I put it down on the TV stand in the bedroom because I unpacked all my clothes.

And I remember in my head saying, Greg, don't leave it here because this isn't where you're going to leave your wallet and your keys. You're going to leave them in a living room. And I thought, no, I'll be fine. I just what happens in my head.

And so then I go work out and I never wore it the rest of the weekend. And then when I left, I'm in the Uber. And all of a sudden I was like, oh, I don't have my wedding ring. I said, oh, I know.

So I called the hotel, told him exactly where it was. He said, if housekeeping finds it, we'll get it back to you. We'll let you know. And so a couple of days later, they called and said we didn't find a ring. So I said to Lori, I go, Lori, I lost another wedding ring. And she's like, well, you don't need to replace it. I know you love me. You don't need to wear a ring.

So I did something that I thought I would never do in December of this past year. I went and I got a tattoo wedding ring on my finger and it's in an L. And again, things I love. So it's also got a cross for Jesus and then a circle to say eternally we're going to be married together.

And the truth is now the only way to lose this ring is to actually lose my finger. So we're there on that.

You know, all of that is to say we're beginning this new series. Hey, don't skip this. And there are some scriptures that we oftentimes skip over that we don't read or we kind of think and go, what does that even have a purpose there? Or we don't even teach them in kids ministry there. Or we didn't learn about them when we were growing up or we sit there and someone tells us about them. We go, I think I've heard of that. What does that mean? And we go, I don't know. It's really not that big of a deal.

And I like to say everything in the scriptures are interesting. But also they're going to be something that for us is important for us to know. And so it's interesting and it's important for us.

And today we're going to dive in in this series. We're going to dive in into an event that helps us remember that no matter the things that we feel like are small or forgotten or not a big deal, whether

it's a ring or a piece of jewelry or an emotion or a feeling, we're going to hear that first God cares about that.

And the three things that I want us to discover out of this Bible event today is one, God cares about what you care about. God cares about what you care about. Number two, God can work miracles in your everyday life. He can work miracles in your everyday life.

And three, God uses ordinary people to help others.

So over the next four weeks, I'm going to invite you, bring your Bibles or open up your Bible apps with us when we get there. And I want to share with you what the word of God is saying.

And today we're going to jump into an event. And by the way, I'm going to use over these four weeks when we talk about these, I'm not going to use Bible stories. I'm going to use Bible events. And I want to use events because these are events that we're going to hear and they're going to go, wow, that's interesting.

But also I want us to know that they're real. These events actually happen. They're not fairy tales. They're not kind of stories like we would think of, of like nice parables or anything like that. These are actual events that did happen.

And so I want us to affirm that, especially in a world that has a world that's biblically illiterate, that would kind of go, is everything in the scriptures true? And these are true events that happen. And so us using the word events says, this is real. This happened. And here's what I know about it.

So I want us to jump into our first event and it's from second Kings chapter six, one through seven. And here's what God's word says to us.

The company of the prophet said to Elisha, look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan where each of us can get a pole and let us build a place there for us to meet. And he said, go. And then one said to him, won't you please come with your servants? I will, Elisha replied. And he went with them.

Then he went to the Jordan and he began to cut down trees. And as one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe fell into the water. Oh no, my Lord, he cried. It was borrowed. And the man of God said, where did it fall? Then he showed him the place and Elisha cut a stick and threw it in there and it made the iron float, lifting it out.

And he said, then the man, and he said to the man, lift it out. And he said, then, then the man reached out his hand and he took it.

Now I want us to dive a little bit into what the scriptures are saying to us here.

First of all, I think it's really important for us to note first with the place of the company of the prophets or some translations, you may be reading the sons of the prophets.

Here's what I want you to think about this. This is really saying that these are a group of men who were dedicated to learning the word of God. And basically they've been organized into a school or into a community under the leadership of a prophet in this case, Elisha.

And so, so think of it like this. These are a group of seminarians or interns, like a group of people who are studying the word of God in order to share the word of God. And so what they're going to be doing is they're going to be spreading the knowledge of Yahweh and they want to, they want people to know and hear about it.

Now, the other piece we have to remember is that they are doing this under the prophets and are learning to become prophets themselves.

I think it's an important thing for us to remember. Prophecy doesn't just mean a foretelling of future events. That is one term of prophecy. But another term for prophecy as well is also a recalling and remembering, bringing people back to repentance and returning to the ways of their life.

And that's what these ones are being trained for because this is a time when this is written, this is at the time where Israel is beginning to lose, beginning to lose their call to follow only Yahweh.

They're starting to fall into idolatry and they're starting to fall away from being the people of God. And so these prophets are going to be sent out to bring the remnant back and to remind them to stay faithful and to return to the ways that they live.

Also, they're going to do, and this, this I actually think is miraculous. I believe that you're seeing a miracle in this spot. They're going to go do normal work, chopping down wood and building.

And why do I say that? Well, I say that just from personal experience. Most pastors, most people that say, I want to go into a full-time church work ministry like this have no marketable skills outside of what they're doing.

And so when you sit there and say, hey, a bunch of pastors are going to go build a building, that's a bad idea. That's not going to work. Only a miracle of God will allow that building to be built and to withstand. But here they are, they're going to actually go.

And what they need is they need a bigger place to live. They need a bigger place to learn and to grow together. And so they need to go build this building.

Now they're not tradesmen by call. They're not trained for this job, but they're going to go and do the manual labor to get the job done.

This reminded me when I was reading this, there's some reminded me of my wife, Lori. Lori always says, Greg, when it comes to manual labor, you don't need skill. You just need a little effort. You need to be willing to sweat.

And at one time in Michigan, quickly, we were pouring a concrete patio and it ended up crushing our sump pump line. And so we called and they said, yeah, we'll have to dig a new line and connect it to the city pump line.

And so a guy came out and he said, yeah, I'm going to bring an excavator and I'm going to dig the line and we'll find it down there and I'll activate it. And we said, Great, How much does that cost?

And he's like, it'll be about \$8,000. And so he left and Lori looks at me and she's like, we're not spending. I said, no, we don't spend \$8,000 on this. And she goes, I think we can do this ourselves.

And I was like, well, I said, yeah, I mean, I sure I can rent an excavator. I just don't know how to use one. And she's like, no, no, no, we can dig, we can dig the line ourselves and do all that work.

And then they can come, come do that. And I was like, I can't do that. No way. So then we found a guy who said he'll come hand dig it with his son and he was going to dig it. And he was about half the cost, a little, actually a little, little less than half the cost.

And so we were like, great. So he gets down to the very end and it's about 50 yards to, to get to where the city line was.

He gets down to the end and that city line was buried. He was about 10 feet deep. And I remember seeing Pat at the bottom of this hill and just dirt flying up out of the hill.

And Lori and I are looking out in a window and I looked at her and I said, still think we could have done that ourselves?

In her head, I heard her loudly say, you were right. She never said it out loud, but I was pretty sure I heard that.

So what we learn here is that, that, that we're seeing that the sons of the prophets, they had three things going for them. One, they had the initiative. They wanted to learn the word of God and they knew they needed a bigger place.

So they had the initiative to say, let's get this done.

Two, they were cooperative together, that they all went and they did the job together. It wasn't just any one person that was doing it. It wasn't, well, that's your job. Or you're better at that. They all did that.

And even when they invited Elisha, he said, of course I will.

And number three, they were just willing to do the work. They were willing to do the work.

And, and so as we look at this, we see that, that they're willing to go and do the work that God has called them to do in order to do the future work that they know that they're called to do.

And lastly, in this event, we see that there was a problem.

One of the men was cutting down a tree. And as he went back with his axe, that the axe head flew off and it fell into the water and he was upset and he said, oh no, my Lord.

And he wasn't upset because he no longer had an axe to use. He wasn't upset that he had to stop and it would delay the work.

He was upset because the axe was borrowed. And his and their reputation is on the line.

I want you to think about a time you've borrowed something.

Do we not care for it a little more because we know it's not ours?

Have you ever lost something that you borrowed? I have.

Have you ever borrowed someone's car and got into a car accident? Like, do you feel terrible? Yeah, right?

It's an awful experience, right? We feel bad because someone has trusted us with something that is theirs. Whether it's big or small, it belongs to someone else.

And Elisha is going to restore their reputation and ensure that they can continue to do the ministry which they've been called to do.

And that leads us to our first point.

First, that God cares about what you care about.

I want you to hear that. God cares about what you care about. Big or small.

And I think sometimes this gets lost with us because we think, well, does God really care about that prayer that I have? That need that I have? That emotion that I have?

And the answer clearly from this is yes, He does.

In John chapter 6, we see that God cares about the little things.

And it's a big thing that He does, but He cares about the little things, right?

He's preaching. He's sharing the word. He's given a message.

This is the message from God Himself.

He's got 5,000 men and countless women and children sitting there and listening.

And as He's preaching, the day is going long.

And the disciples come to Him and they go, hey, Lord, I think it's time to wrap this up. They're hungry. Their stomachs are growling. The kids are fidgety. They need to go home and eat.

I don't know about you, but when I read that, my first thought in my mind is like, if Jesus is here preaching and Jesus is talking to us and we're getting to sit at the feet of Jesus, I think I could fast for a long time.

Like, I could make it throughout. I would tell my kids, no, you're not hungry, right?

Like, I mean, it would be like if we're sitting here and Jesus is talking to us and preaching here at King of Kings, and then the clock turns red and someone comes up and the music gets a little louder and it's like, hey, Jesus, wrap this up. Like, 65 minutes is coming, right?

Wouldn't we be like, well, this is Jesus.

Turn off the clock.

I would think Jesus might've been like, they'll be fine.

But notice what he does. He says, well, then let's feed them. You feed them.

We can't, we've only got these five loaves and two fish.

All right, let's feed them.

And let's fill their bellies to the fullness that there's 12 basketfuls of food left over.

He feeds them.

He cares what they cared about.

And right then they were caring about their physical hunger, their needs.

God cares about what you care about.

I like what Corrie Ten Boom says.

She says that there's no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.

That when the ax head falls to the depths of the lake or of the water, that God can raise it up and return it to us.

That there's nothing so small that God's not willing to listen to your prayer because God listens when you pray.

God listens when you pray.

God listens when you pray.

There's nothing outside his bounds.

You don't have to sit there and say, well, there's other things that are more important than my little prayers.

No, your prayers are very important to God.

God listens to everything you pray about.

Everything you lift up, God listens to your prayer.

So is it something in your job? Is it something in your family? Something in your marriage? Something in your parenting?

Is it something in your house that needs fixed? Is it something about your car?

Is it something about your garden? Is it something about a neighbor?

Is it an emotion? Is it a fear? Is it an anxiety? Is it a stress? Is it a worry? Is it just this kind of uneasy feeling? Is it a small physical pain?

I want you to think right now and say, what is the one little thing? And there are many, but what is the one little teeny tiny thing that you're praying about right now? Maybe not consciously praying about, but just the one little thing that nags you.

I'll tell you mine right now, is I hurt my finger the other day. It just hurts. And it's just a little bit painful and it's scratched up a little bit.

And every time I stick it in my pocket, it just hurts a little bit.

And every time some, and like I've been sitting there today and just going, God, just help my finger not hurt.

Is it life changing? No. Is it debilitating? No.

Are there other things in the world that I would say are more important prayers? For sure.

But is it something that matters to God? Yes.

And God cares about it because he cares about me.

Pastor and theologian Dale Ralph Davis said, God's power is not only for the great crisis, but also for the small and nagging losses of life.

The God of the big things is still the God of the little things.

And I'll be honest with you.

This came alive to me where I understood this when I was in seminary.

I had a group of friends and once a week we would gather together and we'd pray for one another and we'd pray over needs, great and small.

But one day the need got like really small to me from someone and we were praying.

And he just said, he said, I'm just really tired today.

And I'm just praying that God would give me the energy to get through the rest of the day.

And so we prayed, but afterwards I came up to him and I just said, Hey, Aaron, I said, I got to admit, of all the things that we talk about happening in the world and where we're at and all the stuff, do you think God really cares about your energy level? And he looked at me with all seriousness and he said, Oh, I know he does. And I said, What? And he said, I know because I'm a son of his. I'm his child.

And so he cares about everything that I care about.

And he wants to hear me.

And I was, I was like, it just opened my eyes to a total different understanding of prayer.

I want you right now because you have a little thing. I have a little thing.

I want you right now.

We're going to take 15 seconds and I just want you to pray about that little thing to God right now.

Let's pray.

Don't ever forget God cares about what you care about.

And then it reminds us too, that God can work miracles in everyday life.

I think we spend so much time thinking that miracles are only these big flashy, showy things that happen, that the miracle is the, the, oh, I've been diagnosed with cancer and I've seen it on a pet store.

(There appears to be repeated text here, likely a transcription error — skipping repetitive parts.)

But what if also miracles are just things that happen in the everyday?

That miracles aren't flashy and showy, that they're giant, but we have our eyes and our ears and our hearts open to seeing what God is doing in our midst.

The miraculous of the mundane is the way I like to think about it.

And in John chapter 21, Jesus has risen from the dead.

And do you know what he does?

He does a lot of things, but one of the things that we see that is miraculous, Jesus has risen from the dead.

And in John 21, he goes to the beach and he makes breakfast for his friends.

He starts a fire and he cooked some fish.

And he has the miracle of breakfast on a beach. On a beach.

And the gospels are filled with that, where Jesus is quietly doing the miraculous in our midst.

And he shows up.

And it's a reminder of Elisha coming as well when he just comes and he makes the axe head float because he sees that there's unrest in his servant's heart.

Jesus knows that there's unrest in his friend's heart as they're out on the water.

And he brings a miracle of making breakfast, showing that I'm bringing you peace. I'm giving you provision and my presence is with you here.

The same as Elisha did.

And that miracle happens in their midst and they see it.

You see, God does that still to this day.

And friends, I want to share.

I think we miss the miracles happening.

I know I have.

Like the miracle of taking the gift of communion.

Where we believe that this is the physical, tangible body of Christ and blood of Christ in, with, and under this very bread and this very wine.

And that miraculously his presence is with us physically.

Not in some spiritual way, but in actual, physical, tangible way.

You and I hold the very body of Jesus Christ.

You and I take and drink the very blood of Christ.

And the blood of the lamb is not on the doorposts, but is upon the hearts of his people.

And we walk out with the physical incarnation of God dwelling with us and within us into a world and share and show the presence.

It is a miracle that has happened to us.

And it happens regularly.

I believe our theology on baptism is the theology that shows to us that God is a God who works miracles in the every day and every way through everything.

And through simple water, with the application of the word, he miraculously gives you and I everlasting and eternal life and writes our names in the book of life forever and changes us and transforms us and gives us the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us as a tiny infant and a babe.

And guess what it shows?

The miracle isn't dependent upon us seeing or knowing and being changed physically and seeing it and going, oh, wow, that has to be God.

You and I don't even know that it happens in our theology of baptism, but it does.

And it's the consistent reminder to us that God doesn't need a big show to do a big miracle.

God doesn't need to show off.

He doesn't need to say, ha, look what I can do.

Here's the biggest thing that you've ever seen.

He doesn't need to do that.

Matter of fact, I don't even think God wants to show off.

I think simply God is saying, I'm going to show up and I'm going to be with you and I'm going to show you the miracles by being with you and giving you peace and provision and presence.

And so when we open our eyes to see the very miracles of God around us every day, we can see God at work.

That God takes and lifts a simple axe head out of the water to restore a reputation.

Because he cares about what we care about.

And so when God does that, he then uses ordinary people to help others.

Ordinary people to just walk alongside one another and help each other.

My dad, my dad is an old school guy.

And growing up, he told me all the time, Greg, I don't like tattoos.

You don't need tattoos.

I think tattoos are bad.

And so when I got the tattoo, I got a message from my dad.

And he said, why would you get a tattoo?

You don't need a tattoo.

And I said, yeah, but I lose rings and blah, blah.

And he's like, yeah, I don't.

And then he goes, you lose rings.

He's like, Greg, I could have found your ring.

My dad is a ring finder.

He's part of this group that is called Ring Finders.

And he actually had a woman from Spain call him up and say she was out throwing a football to her son on a vacation with her husband.

And as she threw the ball, her \$10,000 wedding ring flew into the ocean.

And they looked and looked and couldn't find it.

And her husband was like, it's no big deal. I can buy you a new one.

And they're on a vacation in Spain.

So, and he's like, I can buy you a new one.

It's no big deal.

And she's like, no, it's the one you gave me.

It's really important to me, right?

Small thing, important, right?

And so she called my dad, found him online.

And he came and he asked where it is.

Now, his metal detector, he can go up to about his chest in water and still be able to use his metal detector.

So she tells him where and he searches all day long and can't find it.

And then finally, she's like, and he's like, I don't know if I can.

He said, let me try one thing.

He said, you were here.

And so then he just kind of went a few yards out and got up to where he just wasn't really high, was higher than he's supposed to be.

But he checked and he hears a beep and he looks and he sees a sparkle.

And so then he dives down and he grabs it and he comes up and he goes, is this it?

And she goes, that's it.

And he finds her ring and she rejoices and says, I can't wait to see my husband and call him.

And God uses ordinary people.

God uses ordinary people to serve and to care.

And that's what we see in this story.

And we see that throughout the scriptures.

We see that throughout the Bible.

I'm reminded of God using ordinary people, ordinary women to advance the gospel.

Jesus knew that when he drew others around that had buy-in, that the gospel would advance.

And so he wanted others to participate in that advancement of the gospel.

And we read about in Luke 8, about Johanna, the wife of Cusa, who's a steward of Herod of Antipas, whose husband is a steward of his.

And we see that Johanna, the wife of Cusa, the manager of Herod's household, Susanna and many others.

They help support them out of their own means.

And what we see throughout the scriptures, just like we see in 2 Kings, is we see what I call Elisha moments.

Moments where someone has said, will you come with us?

Will you help me?

Will you do this?

And the answer is, I will, Elisha replied.

And I want to invite you to think about what are your I will moments?

And we've seen them over and over again.

From when the hurricanes devastated Houston and we sent teams down to help restore and rehabilitate homes that were destroyed by floods, that men and women said, I will.

And they went and they served.

To right now in three weeks, we have young men and women who've said, I will go with our youth to the youth gathering in New Orleans.

To our continued call that we are in need of people to help out in our kids' ministry.

And are you willing to serve and to impact kids by showing up and being a part of serving them in the ministry here that happens on Sunday mornings?

And my own daughter who serves at 11 o'clock heard that.

Heard that plea and had her Elisha moment where last week she said to us, I'm gonna start also going at nine o'clock and serving at the nine and the 11 o'clock hour. I will.

To our students who are in operation front row takeover and who say, I will sit in the front row and be a leader to the multi-generations and the older generations of what it is to come and be excited and to worship our God from the front, not the back. I will.

Where's your Elisha I will moment?

Because the truth is, because the truth is, and you and I know this, we learned this over the past month, your impact is always gonna be bigger than your effort.

And again, I wanna invite you to grab cards where you wanna share with someone and say, you've made a difference, you made an impact in my life.

Because they had an I will Elisha moment where they did something that impacted you.

See, at the end of the day, Jesus doesn't need you to be famous to change a life.

He just needs you to be faithful.

It's what the sons of the prophets learned.

It's what the women and the disciples learned.

It's what you and I continue to learn, to be faithful.

So this week, I'm gonna ask you to do three things.

First, I'm gonna ask you to pray over small things to God because they matter to him.

You care about them, so does he.

And whether it's a spoken word or just a whisper, matter of fact, that small thing that you prayed about earlier, I wanna invite you to whisper that right now to God.

Just whisper it.

And I want you to know that as you whispered it, it came loud and clear to our father.

And he cares and he's answering right now.

Second, I wanna invite you to observe the miracle that happens.

Observe a miracle.

Open your eyes, open your ears, and open your heart.

Observe the miracle that happens because God is doing miraculous things.

Miraculous things in your midst.

It doesn't always need to be showy.

And it doesn't happen to someone else.

You're his disciple.

He's at work within you, around you, and in your midst.

And lastly, I wanna invite you when someone says, will you come, will you help, will you do?

Be an ordinarily helpful person and have your Elisha moment and say, I will.

I will go.

I will come.

Hey, don't skip this because these events in the scriptures are not only interesting, but they're insightful for what God is doing in your life today, tomorrow, and forever.

I wanna invite you to stand and let us pray.

Father God, we thank you and praise you that you've given us interesting and insightful events throughout the scriptures to inform our lives in greater ways of your love and your care.

That you care for us, oh God.

That you work and perform miracles amongst us.

And that you, God, you are calling us to be people like Elisha, like Joanna.

Say, I will.

And who go and partner in the gospel and rejoice with one another because we are community together.

So Lord God, thank you for the blessings you have poured out upon us and amongst us.

We love you and we're loved by you.

And all God's people said, amen.