

Prayer: Children of a loving God, your emptiness is but the preparation for being filled, and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, you are our strength and redeemer. Amen.

## **FILLING EMPTY VESSELS**

The story – picture the story in your mind. The prophet is sick and had to borrow to pay bills. Then he died, leaving his family in debt, with only a little oil left. In comes the prophet Elisha and a miracle happens.

Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.” (2 Kings 4:3-4)

This was the word from the prophet Elisha to a widow who was so poor and in debt that she and her son were about to be sold into slavery for the money they owed.

In the kind of faith that desperation brings, she asked all her neighbors for whatever container she could borrow from them. Gathering the containers together in her home, she took the last small remaining bottle of oil and began to pour it into the assembled vessels. The prophet would not do this for her; she had to step out in faith herself.

I’m sure her heart beat a mile a minute as she began to pour. The oil flowed out of the small bottle and into one of the borrowed containers, and it kept on flowing. By a miracle, through the promise of God, the laws of physics were temporarily suspended and a small bottle of oil filled many larger containers.

The widow gathered the vessels in faith, and the measure of the miracle was determined by the measure of her faith in gathering. In this case, the only limit was the limit of what she made available to God. When one container was filled she set it aside and went on to the next empty vessel, until they were all filled.

The oil miraculously flowed as long as the vessels were gathered, assembled, and ready. The question on this first Sunday of the 8th month of 2020; another day of wondering why God? God asks us, how much do you want to be blessed? Do you have the capacity to receive? That capacity is up to you – how many empty jars have you collected? How greatly do we want our Church to be blessed and to grow? Do we have the capacity to receive? That capacity is dependent upon how many empty jars we are willing to collect.

As long as there is capacity to contain and to receive, the oil of God will continue to be poured out. The flow of oil was not determined by God’s ability or willingness to give but the availability of empty jars which depended upon the woman and her sons’ endeavors to collect and receive.

When the people of God are gathered in faith, assembled in order, and ready to receive, they will see God work among them.

One more thing to consider: all those borrowed vessels also had to be empty before they could be filled with oil. We can be too full of ourselves, too strong in ourselves, for God to really do His work in. Charles Spurgeon said, “A full Christ is for empty sinners, and for empty sinners only... It is not our emptiness, but our fullness which can hinder the outgoings of free grace.”

Our neighbors’ empty jars collected, may speak of used up lives, empty lives, in need of God’s touch, in need of the little oil left over in the widow’s home that represents her lifeline.

Christian who were once full but now empty due to neglecting their relationship with God, need oil. A great truth: a little in the hand of God avails much when we learn to ask, then receive in obedience. Even our neediness and weaknesses become great blessings. Faith as small as a mustard seed.

Paul said: 2 Corinthians 12:10, *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Why? 2 Corinthians 12:9 *'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness... that Christ's power may rest on me.'*

God can work miracles through our emptiness – as long as faith is ready to receive His filling. His strength is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Even concerning Jesus, Paul commented: 2 Corinthians 13:4 *'He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by God's power.'* Thus we can even rejoice in our suffering!

How greatly do we want our Church to be blessed and to grow? Do we have the capacity to receive? That capacity is dependent upon how many empty jars we are willing to collect. Go around and ask ALL your neighbors for their empty jars. DON'T ASK FOR JUST A FEW.

Go inside and shut the door. Pour oil into all the jars and as each jar is filled put it to one side. Here we have an imagery of prayer. Matthew 6:6 *'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.'*

Pour the oil, being filled with the Holy Spirit. V6 She kept pouring (praying in the Spirit). The sons kept bringing the empty jars and putting the filled jars to one side. What was of no value is now filled with value!

V6b - *Oil stopped flowing.* Why? **NO MORE EMPTY JARS!** Has God stopped blessing us because we have NOT been bringing to Him our empty jars, and thus came into debts to our creditors in life? Has our Church stopped growing because we have not gone to our neighbors and brought in their empty jars to be filled?

What do you think the woman/sons/neighbors said when they found out about their empty jars? If only we have given more? If only we gave to God more of our needs in prayer and reach out more to our friends and neighbors and bring their empty jars too? Stop parading empty jars or leaving them in corners. Remember God's supply of oil is unlimited except by our willingness to bring to Him our empty jars!

2 Corinthians 4:7 *'We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.'* That's what the oil represents. Keep on pouring! Don't ask for just a few! Keep asking, seeking, and knocking and let the oil flow and be blessed!

Are you available this morning? You have to empty yourself, of yourself, your flesh, the cares of this world and stay continually filled with the fire of God's presence in your lives. I humbly encourage you, Sisters and Brothers, to do whatever it takes in your life to be an empty vessel fit for filling. Amen.