

II Kings 6:1-7; Matthew 6: 25-33; The Lost can be Found I. The Need for Room II. The Lost Axe-head III. The Debt Averted

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever lost something that was precious to you- and after giving up hope for recovery- suddenly that which was lost was found? There is great joy when lost things are found in the Bible- think of the lost coin or the lost sheep in Luke 15 and the joy of the one who finds! Whether it is wedding ring lost in the snow, or lost keys, phones or wallets. We are pretty good at loosing stuff. But although these things are small- mostly insignificant in the grand scheme- that does not make them unimportant to us at the time! Once again as we return to II Kings, we are struck by the fact that our God is present and active in the big and the small moments of life! God is not only concerned with the Kings of Israel and Syria, He is also present and compassionate towards the widow and her need! Not only is God in control of the rise and fall of nations, but even the rise and fall of trees. All things are so firmly in our Father's hand, as our catechism states, that nothing can happen outside of His control! That applies to the geo-political world as well as the construction project and lost tools. Deadly stew is remedied- birds of the air find a home- and the grass of the field is clothed as we read in Mt. 6. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the care of God in the small moments of life as an ax-head is recovered. In the middle of this Middle-Eastern chaos and conflict between Syria and Israel, God takes notice of this one man's need. And in this we find comfort for us all- knowing that God sees and cares for us in the big and little moments of life.

I. The Need for Room

A common misconception about God is that He is too big or too busy to care about my small, insignificant life. That is one of the most common false ideas about God today. If God is real, He is much too busy to see me or to care about my little life. But as we find in our text, nothing escapes His gaze and no problem is too small for Him to solve. Our passage begins with a good problem- we find a pressing need for room. So the sons of the prophets say to Elisha in v. 1, the place where you dwell is

too small for us all. The seminary has grown, Elisha's house in Gilgal has become overcrowded, and a solution is needed. Where a few weeks back we found that this group was hungry and the only had poison soup to eat, now a new problem is at hand. There is no room for all these men to study, sleep and live. So the small house at Gilgal- as we find in 4:38- needs to be addressed. This is a sign of blessing to be sure- there is such a desire and dedication to God's word- His Spirit has been moving in the hearts of men in Israel- so that the current residence cannot hold them all. It would be like Mid-America needing an addition- that is good problem to have. Or a church needing to expand their education wing because of all these children being born- that is kind of problem church leaders like to face! So one of these student suggests a building project- lets go down to the Jordan and cut some logs and make a place for us to dwell. Now Gilgal was less than 10 miles from the Jordan- so they could easily make this journey. And the Jordan Valley had plenty of wood to use. This project was going to be a community project- since funds were tight, the sons of the prophet would do the work themselves. The Jordan Valley would be an ideal place- waterfront property with a view- close to water and a refreshing oasis for these men to study at. So these pastors in training begin the work. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty- they take up axes and start felling these trees. They were looking for beams- or logs as v. 2 puts it. This is going to be a big building. The same word is used to describe the beams in the temple that Solomon built. So this was not a small project. And these men are busy with their manual labor or felling trees and getting the site ready for this building complex.

II. The Lost Ax-head

But as the work continues, there is a major problem that one man faces. He ends up losing the axe that he was using- and that axe was borrowed. An ax head flew off the wooden handle. Now remember that we are in the iron age of history- when iron implements were used but they were very expensive. Stone axes were common and cheap- but an iron ax was a luxury that few would have had. Now if we lost an axe head in the water, we would not think much of it. Just go to Home Depot and get

another one, right. But we have to remember that an iron axe was not common- that is why he had to borrow one. During the oppression of the Philistines in David's day- and now the raiding by the army of Syria, the metal making capabilities of the Israelites were severely hampered. They were always behind the curve when it came to metal making capabilities. It is estimated that an iron axe would cost over a month's worth of wages for a normal man. So instead of 80\$ like they are today, this ax would cost a few thousand dollars. And borrowing this ax would be more like borrowing your friend's truck, only to have that truck wrecked during your use- with no insurance to cover the cost. So now we are getting at the heart of this problem. We have a prophet swinging an axe; the head falls off- and this axe was borrowed. And as Ex. 22 put it, if you borrow something you must make good on it if the thing you borrow dies or is lost. Return it or pay for it. Now this puts this young man in a tight spot- he is poor- he lives in Elisha's company of prophet. It looks like bondage is the only solution- he will need to sell himself into slavery to pay for this lost implement of forestry. How could this seemingly poor man restore what was lost? How could he recover this borrowed tool? As he sees the axe-head disappear with a splash he cries out in v. 5- Alas, it was borrowed! Woe is me; I am undone! Dropping an iron axe head into the muddy Jordan would make that head lost for good. Like a needle in a haystack. Have you ever tried to find something that you dropped in a lake? If you don't grab it before the next wave, it's gone for good unless it floats! When I was younger, my friend dropped an expensive watch in a lake. That part of the lake was only 7 feet deep- but try as we did- we could not find it. And this was dropped in a river- with its constant flow and moving sediment. But this man cries out to the LORD- or to Elisha his master. He will sure be glad that they invited Elisha to come with them back in v. 3. Because when the prophet of the LORD is present, there is always hope! What is lost may be hopelessly lost in our view- but with the Prophet of the LORD- that which is lost can be found!

III. The Debt Averted

The need of this man was great- and his plight is not ignored by Elisha and His God! The fear, woe, debt and possible bondage will be averted! So we come to our third point where Elisha asks the man- where did the axe head fall? Seeing the place, Elisha throws in a stick and the iron head floats. Literally, the iron axe swims. Elisha takes a stick- the word used is “wood.” So Elisha throws wood into the water to make iron float- and this wood is of unknown size. It can mean stick or even a tree. This word- “Etz”- in the Hebrew- is used in Gen. 3 to describe the tree of life- and in Dt. 21 where the wicked sinner will be hung on a tree. So this wood, stick or tree is thrown into the river- and the impossible happens. Axe heads do not float. For that matter, flour does not make deadly soup whole; nor does salt turn a poisonous spring into fresh water. But the wood is a sign- a symbol of God’s power and the truthfulness of the prophet’s word- and the iron head floats. God’s hand is not short- He is able to do immeasurable more than we think or imagine. He can make iron float- cause the dead to rise. He can cause a man to walk on water and He can turn that water into dry land! Nothing is impossible for our God! Lost sheep can be found- lost sons restored- and lost axe heads recovered! Now this is miracle seems to be trivial- what is the point here? Well, we can learn something about our God to be sure. There is hope for those things that are lost- because God can find and restore them! Nothing is hidden from His gaze! This man knows his need and he cries out to the prophet for help. Only the LORD can help and restore in a hopeless situation like this! We can find something of the commitment of our God- when He wants to find- He will find that which He seeks! There is an aspect of the Good Shepherd who finds His lost sheep to be found here- the recovery of something that was lost. No depth or distance too deep or far that He cannot find! But more specifically, we find that our God cares for His people even in the small moments of life! Not only does He care for the birds and the grass as we read in Mt. 6- He cares for His people! Jesus does not ignore the physical needs of His disciples. He often provided bread for their bodies. We are taught by Jesus to pray for our daily bread- give us each day what we need for our body and soul! We should never be ashamed to ask God for daily, small, insignificant things! He delights to hear from

us! He takes pleasure in the call of faith- O LORD- help! I need you- today, in this moment! I know others might see my plight as small and insignificant- but I know that I am precious and dearly loved by my Father who cares for me! So we could say that Jesus is teaching us in this passage that He cares for us and sees our struggles in the big and small moments of life! We should not be afraid to ask God for His blessing on our breakfast- and His protection when we travel. Nothing is too small of a matter to take to our LORD in prayer!

To conclude, our passage this morning reminds us that our God cares for us- even in our daily needs and struggles. The application of this text is not- don't borrow other people's tools or to be careful when swinging an axe. Rather, we see something of our God concern for common people with daily cares and concerns. This is really comforting! God does really care for every one of His children – the plight of every sheep is His focus! He can be relied upon- called upon- with our every concern! The man in our passage called upon the LORD- and his need was met, bondage averted and sorrow turned to joy! Imagine walking out into the Jordan to pick up your lost axe head which was swimming on the surface of the water! What a God we serve! As our theme states, Jesus Christ reveals the care of God in the small moments of life as an ax-head is recovered. So may we all be confident and comforted as we call upon Him in our days of trouble. As Psalm 50 puts it, call upon me in your day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me!