

What's In Your Hand?



Title: What's In Your Hand?

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Smythe Street Church

Opening – 3 Stories

Three People are set up across stage. First person reads their passage about Moses (centre stage). Lights go down on reader 1, come up on reader 2 (stage right) who reads the story of the widow. Lights go down on reader 2 and come up on reader 3 (the story of the feeding of the 5000). Lights go down and readers exit. Lights come back up for message.

Exodus 3:1–12a,4:1-5 (NIV84) – Max Goodine

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” ⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² And God said, “I will be with you. ...

^{4:1} Moses answered, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’?” ² Then the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied. ³ The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. ⁴ Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. ⁵ “This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”

1 Kings 17 (NIV84) – Meaghan Mead

¹ Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” ² Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ³ “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁴ You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵ So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. ⁷ Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹ “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.” ¹⁰ So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” ¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” ¹² “As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.” ¹³ Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.’ ” ¹⁵ She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah

Luke 9:1–3,6,10-12; Mark 6:37-44 (NIV84) – David Drost

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... ⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

¹⁰ When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. ¹² Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him

and said, “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.”

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” 38 “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Feeling Overwhelmed – Pastor Chad

Have you had a time in your life when you were overwhelmed? I love the stories from the Bible because they present the same types of struggles we face.

Moses – An Overwhelming Mission

Moses struggled with a sense of inadequacy.

Before we find him in the desert, face to face with the voice of God in a burning bush, 40 years previously he had witnessed the trials of the Israelites. He was moved by the injustice of it. He had murdered a man, tried to make a difference and had to flee, rejected even by his people.

He cared, but he moved on, thinking he couldn’t make a difference.

Here 40 years later, an older man, God shows up and speaks to the passion of his youth, the desire he had to lead to make a difference, to liberate. A dream he has buried over 40 years of hiding in the desert.

And Moses is overwhelmed with a sense of personal inadequacy.

We shortened the story today, but Moses keeps looking for excuses.

Us: I hear God has a purpose for my life, I've got a God-given dream, but I don't think I've got what it takes.

The Widow (1 Kings 17)

The widow was in a situation out of her control

- She did not even live in Israel, but the famine that God brought on that land had stretched into hers.
- We don't know what life was like for her before, but as a widow we can imagine that things were not easy for her and her son
- The situation changed and what once was a precarious situation turned desperate.
- An Israelite prophet walks into town, and he asks for water.
 - Irony, there was a drought, yet she seemed to know where to find a bit of spare water for the prophet.
- He then asks for some bread

1 Kings 17:12 (NIV84)

"As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

She was overwhelmed with her desperate need.

The cupboard was bare, and her son was looking at her.

Have you been overwhelmed when the bills are more than the bank account? When the kids want to stop at the dollar store, and you're not sure the debit card can handle a chocolate bar? When rent is due and you don't have a paycheck?

The stories of people in Scripture are our stories, they are people like us.

The Disciples and the Crowd (Luke & Mark)

Disciples returned from their first missions trip

- They had performed miracles, and were excited.
- People came with them
- Jesus preached a long time (all day)
 - Long sermons have been a concern forever it seems

- Concerned for them
 - You provide.

They were overwhelmed with the size of the needs of others around them. (they cared, that's why they suggested Jesus let people go, but now Jesus said it was their issue).

These things can make us feel overwhelmed

A sense of personal inadequacy
By circumstances and our needs
By the needs of those around us

Last Sunday as I was in Worship, this is the word that came that I felt to share today, it comes right from Exodus 4, it is the question God asks of Moses:

Exodus 4:2 (NIV84)

“What is that in your hand?”

I believe this word is for some people here today.
God has put something in your hands.

**We can often look at what we do not have,
and overlook what God has given to us.**

- Moses was stuck looking at himself
- The woman saw the emptying jar
- The disciples saw the crowds

But God answers and says: What's in your hand?

- Moses had a rod
 - God would turn it into a snake, turn the Nile into blood, send down fire and hail with it, and part the Red Sea.
 - It was a stick, but in God's plan it was the gavel of his judgement on injustice

- The woman had ingredients her last supper
 - But when shared it grew and sustained her and the prophet throughout the drought
- The disciples had a small lunch (John says it belonged to a boy).
 - When they brought it to Jesus, it multiplied and there was bread enough to feed a crowd (a feeding that drew their minds back to God's providing manna for his people in the desert)

What Has God given to you? What is in your hand?

FAITH IS TRUSTING GOD TO USE WHAT YOU
HAVE WHEN YOU KNOW IT IS NOT ENOUGH.

Reminded me of a story from my university days:

- \$0.29 to put in the gas tank (don't go to full serve)
- Parents selling their home to go to Uganda

Will You Trust God With What You Have?

- The solution didn't just come by using what they had that was inadequate
 - Imagine Moses trying to free Israel from Egypt with a stick
 - The woman could have just cooked herself and her son a meal
 - The disciples could have started handing out the bread and fish
- There was a trust action first (listening to what God had to say and giving it to him)

THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH PUTTING YOUR LIFE IN GOD'S HANDS

It isn't enough to trust God with your situation, you can trust God to use what is in your hand, when you have put your life in his hands.

The Christian Message is that while we are overwhelmed with our own problems, our inability to fix ourselves, God in Christ offers to take us and forgive us and call

us his children, if we don't whitewash our need and entrust ourselves to his hands.

Will you put trust Jesus, that he died to buy you back from the cost of the wrongs you have done and offers you new life? Will you entrust your life to him?

What happens?

When we begin to trust God with what we have, God provides, and God even provides beyond what we need.

- Moses led the people out of Egypt and established a legacy
- The woman had enough to last her beyond the day and through the famine
- The disciples picked up 12 baskets worth of leftovers.

When we give God what he has given us, God not only meets our need, often we find there is a miraculous excess that spills out to others.

Closing: What Is In Your Hand?

Maybe you are overwhelmed. Look at your hands (as a symbol). What has God given you.

Closing in prayer, extend your hand as offering what God has given to you as an offering for him to use.