Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12)

ENOUGH, BY FAITH
2 Kings 4:42-44
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12)
Analysis by Bill White

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, “Give it to the people and let them eat.” 43But his servant said, “How can I set this before a hundred people?” So he repeated, “Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’ ” 44He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.”

DIAGNOSIS: NOT ENOUGH

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Not Enough Food*
An unnamed man brings a “first fruits” offering to Elisha. He is, perhaps, intentionally bypassing the apostate priests in that region in order to present his offering to the truly faithful “man of God.” But when Elisha instructs him to use his offering to feed one hundred people, he believes he has an impossible problem. How can he possibly feed that many people with only his one sack of twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Not Enough Faith*

His question reveals an even bigger problem. This man does not believe Elisha's word that his first fruits offering is enough food for the Lord to feed one hundred people. This would-be servant of the Lord does not have enough faith to trust the Lord who is speaking to him through Elisha: "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left'" (v. 43b).

Based on his own knowledge, reason, and experience, this man knows he does NOT have enough food to feed one hundred people. It's impossible! To be obedient to this word of Elisha's God will surely end in failure and humiliation, will it not?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Not Enough Faith Is No Faith*
Worse still, if he does not have "enough" faith in Elisha's God to obey this word of the Lord, in reality he has no faith at all in Elisha's God. So, what shall he do now? Shall he act based on faith in his own self, or receive faith to act from Elisha's God? More is at stake here than whether or not one hundred people will have enough to eat this day. There are eternal consequences to his decision.

PROGNOSIS: TRUE FAITH IS ENOUGH

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Elisha's God Is Faithful*
While the faith of this man is vacillating and questionable, the faithfulness of Elisha's God is not. Elisha proclaims the word of the Lord, "They shall eat and have some left," and it is so. Through Elisha's proclaimed word, God offers faith that empowers action. What is more, Elisha's God is so concerned for the people's eternal well-being that the time comes when Elisha's God provides the True Bread from heaven, Jesus Christ. Jesus offers himself—his body, his ministry, his self, which (like barley loaves) don't appear to be enough to satisfy the great

hunger of humanity. But with his death on a cross and his resurrection God seeks to satisfy the needs of every living creature.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Elisha's God Offers Enough Faith*

God uses Elisha's proclamation of the word to work faith in this would-be servant of the Lord. Receiving God's free gift of faith, he who at first believed that it would be impossible to feed one hundred people with his first-fruits offering, now believes the word of the Lord that says, "They shall eat and have some left." In the same way, we who believe that Christ is True Bread are not only fed physically but also spiritually for eternity.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Elisha's God Provides Enough Food*

Not only does the servant to Elisha believe this word of the Lord in his heart and mind, but faith from Elisha's God also emboldens and empowers him to act on it. Obediently he gives his food to the people, they eat, and they have some left, according to the word of the Lord. So we who have received satisfaction in Christ, open our hands so that others may be satisfied.