

A Mistake in the Kitchen

The Bible tells of a guy who experienced a miracle that shows the bigness of God's heart and eternal plan. No, not Moses at the Red Sea or Daniel amid the lions. I'm thinking of a minor colleague of the prophet Elisha, a no-name guy remembered only for making a mistake in the kitchen.

A group of prophets had gathered during a famine, and they put on a pot of stew.

One of the young men went out into the field to gather herbs and came back with a pocketful of wild gourds. He shredded them and put them into the pot without realizing they were poisonous. (2 Kings 4:39)

When the others tasted the poison they wouldn't eat the stew. I can only imagine how the young man felt. His blunder had ruined what might be the only decent meal his friends would have for days. What an idiot! They'd all be better off if he just didn't try to help.

Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." Then he threw it into the pot and said, "Now it's all right; go ahead and eat." And then it did not harm them. (2 Kings 4:41)

At first glance, this miracle may seem trifling—a trick that would make Elisha a big hit at birthday parties, but isn't in the same league with the Bible's greatest wonders. So let's look more closely. What does this story teach us about God?

To me, this story seems to be all about work. In Elisha's subsistence-farming society, famine made a mockery of work. A man could spend months plowing and seeding and weeding only to watch his family starve. On top of that, the story reminds us how evil or foolishness can destroy good work.

I can relate. How often has my own work seemed insignificant? How many times have I messed it up, or seen it destroyed by others? And how many people have lost desperately needed jobs due to economic famine or incompetence or evil?

This story shows that God is determined to redeem our poisoned work. It anticipates the day when Jesus will come to usher in a new earth, free of thorns and thistles and delightful for work. His final victory is assured, and already we are told, "Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Read More: Read Psalm 90:13-17. How might this make a good prayer amid the frustrations of work?

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