

2023 Harvest Pack



📷 Lebiso, an Ethiopian farmer. Credit: Tearfund Canada

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“What do
you have
in your
house?”

~2 Kings 4:2

Bible Passage

1 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.”

2 Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” “Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a small jar of olive oil.”

3 Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few.

4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.”

5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring.

6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.”

Ask the congregation

Sermon Outline

**WHAT IS THE BIGGEST
CHALLENGE FACING PEOPLE
IN IRELAND TODAY?**

Inequality, Healthcare, Housing?

Today's Big Challenges in Ethiopia

Bereket Tadesse who works with one of Tearfund Ireland's partners in Ethiopia recently told us that changing weather patterns are the biggest challenge apart from conflict facing the people of Ethiopia today.


Rains come at the wrong time, so crops don't grow. There is prolonged drought and then the rains come all at once on dry ground and cause major flooding. But it doesn't stop there. When the rains fail or floods come and food is short in rural areas, when fresh produce is no longer available in the market, people living in the major cities are increasingly stretching themselves to send funds to family members in difficulty. People in business and other jobs are unable to go about their daily business because of inclement weather.

People can so easily lose hope and get into debt that is so hard to get out of. I think about Lebiso, a farmer in Ethiopia who has been farming since the age of 15. Lebiso tells us that "climate change has made farming so difficult that some farmers have even had to start begging for their daily food" as their situation has become so desperate.





Passage Insights

 Lebiso walking through his village. Credit: Tearfund Canada

The passage that we read earlier, 2 Kings 4:1-7 tells a story that is still happening today for many that Tearfund Ireland work with around the world, people just like Lebiso and his family.

A woman left widowed in a devastating and vulnerable situation. Her husband had died, with a debt that now transferred over to his wife. This man was a godly man, he had been one of the prophets, which meant he listened to God and spoke out his word to those around him.

And yet his wife and sons were left in this incredibly vulnerable situation when he died. She seems to have had no form of income and the creditors were coming to take her children to work for them as slaves in payment of the debt.

This lady had already lost her husband, now she was facing the loss of her children. She was facing the loss of a secure future. The culture of the day would have seen elderly parents cared for by their children.

Passage Insights

She had almost no hope left – but she took the initiative and went to God’s people for help – the prophet Elisha.

When this widow came to the prophet, Elisha didn’t say “I will give you a grant from the prophet’s fund.”

No, Elisha asked her question.

He asked a question, that Jesus often asked people too – what do you want me to do for you? He didn’t assume he knew. Nor perhaps should we when we seek to come alongside others.

He followed it up with another question: What do you have in the house?

This woman was in a desperate situation. She was about to lose her children. She was quick to reply – “I have nothing” – and we can often feel like we have nothing in the face of difficult and challenging circumstances.

Then maybe, like the widow, we realise we have something tiny. She had a small bit of oil.

The prophet tells her to take what she has, go to her neighbours, ask for jars and begin to fill them with the oil from her jar.

The story tells us that she had neighbours – good neighbours who were happy to help her out with jars. We have our church family, our community, small group members, prayer partners, these are precious things – they can drive us mad at times, but like family let us not take for granted the gift that God has given us.

Passage Insights

She had her home, she could shut the door.

She had her sons who could help.

The widow went back to the man of God. She asked him “What do I do now?” Sometimes life’s challenges can sap our creativity.

What does Elisha say to her? “Start a business.”

“Sell the oil, pay the debt and live on the rest.”

Using the resources she had, with God’s intervention, she was now able to look towards a flourishing future.

ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, farmers already living in poverty, and now with the added impact of the climate crisis, can feel all is lost and that there is no hope for the future. However God can restore creativity, giving new insights and shared wisdom into how to farm the land using the resources they already have to hand, to withstand the unpredictability of changing weather patterns.

And it is incredible how something small can become something significant – just like a whole plant can emerge from a small seed – God gives the increase.



📹 Lebiso and his family farming their land. Credit: Tearfund Canada

WATCH THE VIDEO

Lebiso learned that he did have something, his land which he thought could produce nothing, still had great potential.

A senior church leader at a recent church conference told me of a trip she took overseas with Tearfund some time ago. She was so struck with the message shared by local community members engaged in Tearfund projects. They told her,

‘if God is good and we ask him, surely he will have sent us the resources that we need’

As community members were trained envisioned and inspired by this way of thinking, they began to look around them and realise that indeed there were resources and materials all around them to work with to see themselves lifted out of poverty. That small thing, the gifts and resources they already had became the start of something new.

The widow in the story felt she was stuck, locked in desperate situation. Lebiso and his family felt like this, his children had to leave school and some had to leave home.



Lebiso, Ethiopian farmer. Credit: Tearfund Canada

Yet like the widow, Lebiso already had the resources to change his situation with God's help. Lebiso received training to use the land he already had differently and then came the harvest!

Not only that, but he has gone further to help his neighbours farm better too.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1 *What small thing do you already have in your hand personally or to come alongside farmers like Lebiso as they seek to provide for the their families?*

- Do you feel like you have nothing to contribute?
- Can you partner with Tearfund Ireland financially?
- €21/mo enables us to better plan our future activities & projects
- Can you pray with us?

2 *Lebiso told us that he is passing on his new found knowledge to other farmers.*

- Will you spread the word about this work to people you know?
- Would you like to find out more about the broad range of work we are doing in Ethiopia? Through our SHG learning journey?

3 *What about creativity? Maybe the widow's story and Lebiso's story have caused you think about your own creativity?*

- Ask God to show you your next step.
- Pray for Tearfund Ireland and our partners that we will have creative ideas to combat the challenges that people are facing due to erratic weather and poor crops.

4 *Sign up to get updates and to pray with us*

- Sign up for our monthly prayer bulletin on our website
- Each month, we pray together for Ireland and around the world and give thanks to God for his answered prayers.



Lebiso in front of his house. Credit: Tearfund Canada

Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father we thank you that you are the God of all hope.

Today we particularly remember those who are facing the enormous challenges of conflict and erratic weather as they try to make a living and feed their families. We ask you that as they cry out to you, you would hear from heaven and provide for their needs.

We thank you for all the good things you give us, may we never take them for granted or treat them lightly.

Thank you for our 'small jar of oil'. We bring it to you today to use to create something more.

Thank you for our friends, our families, our neighbours, our church community.

We ask you to restore our creativity. May we be given wisdom and insight to know what we have in our hands and how to make the most of it.

We thank you for the thousands of farmers, men and women who have learned how to farm more productively with new agricultural techniques suited to the changing weather patterns. Bless them, may they be filled with hope and become a beacon of hope for those around them. May many more people join these initiatives this year to see themselves lifted out of poverty.

We give you our "small jar of oil" and ask you to use it for your glory,

In Christ's name Amen.