Pick a number, any number, in your head. Got it?
Raise your hand if you picked a number higher than a million?
Why didn’t more of us pick a higher number?

The place is Stanford University.
The year is 1996.
Two young computer science grad students, Larry Page & Sergey Brin, begin to collaborate on an internet search engine.
At first they call it BackRub; but later they change the name to? ...
Google
Google is a play on the math word “googol,” which is the term for the number 1 followed by 100 zeros.
They picked that number to reflect their goal to organize a vast and infinite amount of information on the web.

Today there are over 5 billion searches on Google every day.
They picked a big number and it came true.

Look with me at a passage in the Bible where someone doesn’t pick a big enough number.

2 Kings 13:14-21
Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. “My father! My father!” he cried. “The chariots and horsemen of Israel!”
15 Elisha said, “Get a bow and some arrows,” and he did so. 16 “Take the bow in your hands,” he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.
17 “Open the east window,” he said, and he opened it. “Shoot!” Elisha said, and he shot. “The Lord’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!” Elisha declared. “You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.”
18 Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and the king took them. Elisha told him, “Strike the ground.” He struck it three times and stopped.
19 The man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.”
20 Elisha died and was buried.
Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. 21 Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

The year is about 830BC. 800 years before Jesus.
Elisha is an exceptional miracle working Prophet in the OT.
The last part of this story shows that.

After Elisha is dead, some people throw a body in the tomb
where his bones lie and
just touching Elisha’s bones makes the body come back to life.

This would be where the ancient belief in Christian relics, like the bones of saints, having healing power comes from.

Before Elisha dies though, when he is sick, a king visits.
   The king is Jehoash.
   Jehoash believes Elisha is the prophet of the one true God.

He goes down to ask Elisha for help.
   When he sees that Elisha is ill, he weeps “My Father ...”
   His tears are partly for Elisha and
   partly because he fears that without Elisha things will get worse.

Things are bad in Israel.
   His armies and resources are very low.
   For decades the Arameans have beat them down to near nothing.
   His other cry is “The chariots and horsemen of Israel!”
   He means we have lost so many and have so few left.

Elisha tells the king to get a bow and some arrows.
   He says, “Take the bow in your hands.”
   Then, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.

**What God would do was linked to what the king would do. (2x)**

“Open the east window,” Elisha said, and he opened it.
   “Shoot!” and he shot.
Elisha yells, “The Lord’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.”

Then Elijah tells the king to take the arrows and strike the arrows to the ground.
   He is not saying, hold them in your hand and hit the ground.
   He is saying shoot more arrows that will land & strike the ground.

The king shoots 3 more arrows and stops.
And the text says, “Elijah, the man of God, got angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.”

... Did you ever show up on a day you didn’t know there was a test and there was a test?

Or did you ever have a teacher give you an assignment in class and they didn’t explain it clearly, but after it was done they said, hand it forward, this was a test?
   That’s maybe what happens to Jehoash.
So Elijah got angry.

**Why do you think Elijah is angry?**

**What did Jehoash do wrong?**

Was it a lack of faith?
   - A lack of concern?
   - A lack of drive?
   - Was it that he was only moderately invested.

He had more arrows he could have shot.
   - He didn’t do everything he could!!
   - He could have done more!

He was a king who believed.
   - He went to the man of God.
   - Where did it break down??

**It broke down on the number he picked!!!**
   **It was too small.**

I love Elisha.
I love his miracles.
I love how unusual his stories are.
I love the enigmas – the riddles.

What does it mean?
   An iron ax head floats in the water.
   Bears maul youths.
   Angel armies all around.
   Dead bones give life.
   And here 3 strikes and you’re out.

What does it mean?
What is it supposed to mean to us?
   Here’s something I think this could say to us.

**If you ever get near the end and you give up,**
   **you will not get all of God’s blessing!!**

Isn’t that what happens to the king here.
   - God was with Him.
   - God showed him he what he was doing.
   - He should have followed through.
   - He should have shot all the arrows, but he didn’t.

He didn’t give up all the way.
   - He just gave a half-hearted effort.
   - You can’t give God half-hearted faith!!

If you do, you might not know what you’re gonna miss out on.
   You might not know that complete victory was just at hand.

All it will take is you take your foot off the gas in your spiritual life.
   Coast a little.
You don’t wanna presume on God.

Maybe you’ll stop “shooting”
And you’ll have a good reason.
- “I stopped shooting because I’m not a very good archer.”
- “I stopped shooting because Elisha didn’t helped me anymore.”
- “I stopped shooting because I thought three was more than enough.”
- “I stopped shooting because I didn’t think it would do any good.”
- “I stopped shooting because I wasn’t in a shooting mood. I didn’t feel like it.”
- “I stopped shooting because I’m getting older, let someone else do the shooting.”

If you ever get near the end and you give up,
you will not get all of God’s blessing!!

This made me think of those of us in our golden years.
Those of you who have loved God and served God for years.

And now in your golden years, maybe
you’re wondering if God still wants to use you.

Maybe you feel like another generation needs to take over.
In a way that is true.

We always have 3 or 4 generations in the church.
And the oldest generation does have to bless some of the middle adult generation to take leadership and let them have their day.

But there is no retirement in the kingdom of God.
God wants all of us to serve him to the last day.
You are appreciated.
You are needed.
We need your wisdom.
We need your care.
We need you to teach us.
We need your to shoot your arrows through the windows of heaven and not give up.

There are some of us in that stage of life who start to doubt God.
Maybe you followed him and served him for years.
But in your later years you’ve quietly grown disillusioned.
And you even doubt if you really have faith.
But on the outside, you keep up appearances.

If you ever get near the end and you give up,
you will not get all of God’s blessing!!

You might not know what is at stake.
Jehoash had just heard Elisha make the connection between the arrows shot through the window and victory over the Aramean army.

   The east window is where the Arameans were.
   He knew that the arrows represented the Lord’s deliverance of Israel against Aram.

Adam Clarke Bible commentary says, “It was an ancient custom to shoot an arrow or cast a spear into the country which an army intended to invade.... The dart, spear, or arrow thrown, was an emblem of the commencement of hostilities.”

   So the king knew what the arrows meant.

They meant that he thought that the true strength of Israel was about to depart from the earth. But Elisha was showing him that the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance was still present, and all Jehoash had to do was to shoot the arrow in faith.

   So take the arrows king and strike the ground!

God is there! God is still there!
God is going to fight for you in a way that you had not seen in years!
   Just believe King.
   Just believe and follow thru!
Believe and put action to your belief!

This is another way we can look at this.
   It might not be about persevering in faith,
   It might be about putting action to your faith.

The king believed, but he needed to act on his faith!!!

A classic Christian preacher named Charles Spurgeon wrote: “It is a fact that God has purposed all things both great and little; neither will anything happen but according to his eternal purpose and decree. It is also a sure and certain fact that, oftentimes, events hang upon the choice of men. Their will has a singular potency.”

God is sovereign.
His will and purposes stand.
   But our faith needs action sometimes.

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved to good works.

The king did not follow through.
   His faith was weak.
   It was not accompanied by strong action.

If you and I believe that God can do the impossible.
   If we pray and ask Him to do something,
And then we are presented with an opportunity to demonstrate our faith or to act on that faith, we have to follow thru. When God invites us to take something by faith, we have to receive it boldly – and obey Him knowing that He is a great king and giver who is honored by bold, reverent requests.

What arrows are you shooting?
How many are you shooting?

“He should have continued striking till the prophet had said, Enough.”

There are many situations in life in which we should keep “shooting the arrows,” but we content ourselves with a weak effort.

- Keep shooting in the pursuit of faith.
- Keep shooting in the battle against sin.
- Keep shooting to do more for the kingdom of God.
- Keep shooting your prayers through the windows of heaven.
- Keep shooting in that area of obedience. Don’t give up too soon.
- Keep shooting in the days when it looks like God’s armies are declining and the power of God is departing. It is not. He is still with us.
- Keep shooting until your last day, until your last breath.
  His hand will be with you.
  He will make your aim straight.