

**Sermon Series**  
**Elijah, A Prophet for Our Times**  
**November 15, 2020**

**Title: The Lord Provides**

*Subject: Elijah, The Widow of Zarephath, Bread, Fear, The Lord, The Word of the Lord, Obedience,*

**Theme Text: 1 Kings 17:11-14 (ESV) <sup>11</sup> And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” <sup>12</sup>**

**And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” <sup>13</sup> And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’”**

**Theme Illustration:** I want you to notice the difference between the widow’s statement in verse 12 and Elijah’s reply in verse 14. The widow of course knew about the Lord, Elijah’s God. But this superficial knowing would not be enough to feed herself, Her son, and Elijah for the remainder of the drought. How could this woman, at the end of her own means, trust this Hebrew prophet to deliver on this unbelievable promise that the Lord God of Israel would provide for her and her son and Elijah until the rains came and a harvest was gathered. After all, what was left of her life was at stake.

She would need real faith in this promise to obey Elijah’s command. Where was that faith going to come from? Remember, **Romans 10:17 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

Notice what Elijah did. He delivered the word of the Lord God of Israel to

the widow and she believed. Her faith was a gift from God. His word did accomplish what this verse says, **Isaiah 55:11 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> **so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**

This promise the Lord gave to a pagan woman whom the Lord had chosen out of all the destitute women in Israel at that time to reveal Himself and at the same time succor His prophet.

***Read: 1 Kings 17:8-16***

**Introduction:** We observe, from verses eight through 10, there was nothing in Elijah's initial observation of the widow that would suggest that she was God's appointed widow. In fact, what Elijah's eyes told him was that she could not possibly support him for the duration of the drought. But Elijah walked by faith, not by sight. Elijah's confidence rested not in what his eyes told him or his experience. His confidence rested in what God told him. Elijah's heart rested upon these words, "I have commanded a widow to provide for you."

We are reminded that the Lord did not tell Elijah her name, what she looked like, or the location of her house. Elijah trusted that God would provide the further light he needed. Elijah's initial encounter with her was quite a matter of fact meeting. To the natural eye, it all appeared accidental, but to the eye trained by providence it was not, **Jeremiah 10:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> **I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.**

Elijah decided to try her with the test of Abraham's servant when sent to find a wife for Isaac. Elijah tests the woman to see if she is kind. Elijah's question was respectful, courtesy is always commanded of God's servant. The widow did exactly what Elijah requested. How we must admire the power of God to move human hearts to acts of kindness to his servants. She

stopped gathering sticks for herself at the first request of this stranger. Her circumstances had not embittered her to the needs of others.

**Transition:** It was Elijah's second request that was met with hesitation. Let us examine:

**1. The Widow's Perception: 1 Kings 17:11-12 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> **And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."** <sup>12</sup> **And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die."**

As she was going to get the water, Elijah added to his request. The prophet decided to test her further by requesting she go another mile. This seemed to be a selfish request. Elijah just asked her for a handout! He has just asked her to share her last meal for herself and her son. Most people would have told Elijah, just get a job. We must wonder at the providence of God who would place her in that situation in the first place. Of course, that's our perception.

Little did the woman perceive it was not just a human prophet that requested this, it was the Lord who had come to help her just as Jesus encountered the women at the well in John four. God intends to indeed supply all of her need. This the same challenge that faced the Canaanite woman in Matthew chapter 15. If you remember her son was demon-possessed. The woman requested that the Lord would cure her son. We need to remember how our Lord tested her, **Matthew 15:26-27 (ESV)** <sup>26</sup> **And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."** <sup>27</sup> **She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."**

Elijah's request would require the thought and anticipation of her own death. We may excuse this woman for she was not of Israel. She had no external clue that this man was a prophet who is sent by God to her specifically. She

had no covenantal promise to fall back on. To her, it was simply hospitality to this stranger or die. Of course, her eye was on the amount of oil and flour she had remaining.

The widow did not know the God of Israel, she no doubt knew of Him. Knowing of Him is not faith. This kind of knowledge brings no comfort and no promise. She did not know that God does not need anything more than five loaves and two fishes, or nothing at all as the manna in the wilderness proves. Does any material lack become an obstacle with Him who calls things that are not as though they are? She had no idea that the God of Israel saw her and her need before she had gotten out of bed that very morning. Did she have faith at this point? No, she did not. This woman had not at this point heard the word of the Lord.

For us, it is amazing how quickly our natural perceptions soon take over when we deprive ourselves of the word of God. From Elijah's standpoint, he had only to marvel at the unseen hand of God as it moved the widow. Elijah knew that the maker of heaven and earth had decreed that she should sustain him. Even if the pot in the jar were empty, God will provide.

**Transition:** The only thing standing between the widow and death was:

**2. The Lord's Promise: 1 Kings 17:13-14 (ESV) <sup>13</sup> And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.""**

Elijah's first words to her after her answer was fear not! This is a word we all need to hear today. We sometimes act like the Lord has no purpose or plan for events that challenge our peace and comfort. Do not be afraid, go and do what you want, but make me a little bit first and then make some for you and your son. I am positive that this command given to the widow in her extremity was the hardest command ever given. None of the laws of God

require this except love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your mind, and your strength. What this woman needed would come like the Lone Ranger, a word from God.

These are the words that should also comfort every Christian heart, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. It is the Lord God of Israel that is telling the woman you will have plenty, all you need until the earth again brings forth fruit. This is the same lesson Elijah learned as he drank water from the brook Cherith and was fed by ravens. Cherith has prepared Elijah for his Zarephath.

The widow had previously sworn that her resources were meager by saying to Elijah, “as the Lord your God lives”. She was throwing a theological bone to Elijah. Elijah corrected her. This Gentile woman must be told that salvation is from the Lord God of Israel. This is the God you’ve heard about but do not know. God gave her His word of promise to rest upon. Will she? Notice, He did not promise her a new jar of flour or new jar of oil.

**Transition:** The question we have is would she obey? At this moment we can see life and death hung in the balance on the Lord’s word and:

**3. The Lord’s Supply: 1 Kings 17:15-16 (ESV) <sup>15</sup> And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup>**

**The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.**

We can hardly believe what we are seeing in the words of verse 15, she obeyed! All of us can exclaim, woman, how great is your faith! All must marvel at the power of God’s word sent to accomplish God’s work. She reminds us of the great faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman who welcomed the visit of Jesus to her borders. With astonishing faith, she overcame the greatest of all obstacles, the obstacle of unbelief.

We observe that the promises of God coupled with faith bring a continuous supply. We see that her faith was manifested in her obedience. We all must remember the Lord's promise, **Matthew 6:33 (ESV)** <sup>33</sup> **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** And **Psalm 34:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> **Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!** Each of these promises is conditional. It is our business to notice how the woman's obedience was placing her faith in God before even satisfying her own need. It is our place in our lives to fear God, obey, and honor Him in all things.

The endless supply that magically appeared in the jar of flour and the container of oil reminds us of the manna in the desert. Does this remind us all of this endless supply of oil and flour reminds us of God's promise to supply us with the bread of life, his word, and with the oil of his grace? This reminds us of the grace that He provides each and every day to those who belong to Him.

**Conclusion:** And now Elijah is dwelling safely in the widow's house well-fed, frugally but sustained. The prophet never became dissatisfied with the bread from heaven and never complained about the lack of variety. He learned from Israel's mistakes. Elijah exemplified this **1 Timothy 6:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> **But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.**

Think about the added blessing to the widow was the company and instruction of Elijah personally. I suspect she learned much from his prayers and sacrifice. Her service to one of God's servants was returned a hundredfold. She is indeed an example of **Hebrews 6:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> **For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.**

Of course, the bread and the oil that nourished her was Christ, the one who was ground between the upper and lower millstones, that we might feed upon the bread of life. Notice that the ingredients were bread, fine flour, and oil. Oil is the metaphor for the Holy Spirit. The believer is sustained by both Christ and the Holy Spirit working together. Christ for us, the Spirit in us.

Christ manifesting His love on high, the Spirit administering His love to us here below. Just as the widow came again and again to the jar and the oil, we also may come to Him again and again. The Lord did not give them a year's supply but supplied them day by day and thus also saints we must continue to go to Him day by day, **2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> **So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. Thus says the Lord God of Israel.**