

1 Kings 17:8-16

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’”

She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

The Mother Who Had Nothing Left Summary: God will always find a way to speak to us. Sometimes it's a verse of scripture, song, His voice we hear or He will use a person. For this mother God brings the prophet Elijah into her life.

Today is Mothering Sunday and in many places around the world the focus will be on mothers. My sermon, although about a mother may not fit nicely into Mothering Sunday, but it is very relevant to us today. This widow was a single parent facing financial difficulties that many parents face today.

And God sees her. Do you ever wonder if God sees you when you are struggling? He does. And He has a plan for you.

For the mother in our scripture He works a miracle.

It appears she has no relatives to care for her. Unlike Jewish families who were commanded to care for widows and orphans, she was a Gentile and it doesn't appear that this was a commandment for them.

Put yourself in her shoes for just a while this morning.

So here you are – totally alone. You look in your cupboard and see you have probably a couple of tablespoons left of flour and maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of olive oil. You don't tell your son but you are so distressed because this is all you have left – perhaps to make a last meal.

So you go outside to collect some wood to build a fire to cook what you can from your meagre possessions.

I wonder what is going through your mind as the mother at that time. A mother must care for and protect her children but now, you just can't see

how you can do this. Are you feeling like a failure, hopeless, have you even told your son?

So rugged up you are picking up small sticks and a man approaches you. It appears you are not sure who he is, but seems like he is some sort of prophet for he tells you of the impending famine and drought to hit the nation of Israel.

Why is he telling you this? Haven't you got enough bad news to deal with? Then, he asks you to bring him a cup of water and a bite of bread.

How would you have reacted? Your responsibility as a mother or a parent is to save your son. He has just told you that there will be no water – now he wants your last cup. He has just told you that there will be a famine – now he wants your last scrap of food.

You may find it difficult to relate to this situation or you may find that it fits with circumstances you have struggled with in the past or may be struggling with now. That is a lot of stress and sadly, many shut themselves away, feeling embarrassed, instead of reaching out to someone who cares.

Poverty does not just exist in third world countries. In Australia there are still many “slipping through the cracks” – going hungry, cold, feeling hopeless. And it has worsened during this pandemic.

As the mother in the story, there is nowhere you can find handouts, Centrelink, Pensions or Food banks. So, would you have replied to this man – you have got to be kidding; would you just have turned away from him or would you have considered what he was saying.

Although you may not fully understand, you respond to Elijah by saying- as surely as your God lives I don't have any bread – only a handful of

flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son that we may eat it and die. Your oath does not necessarily claim that the Lord is your god, but it does affirm to Elijah that what you say is the truth.

And Elijah gives you more, wonderful advice: don't be afraid; go ahead and do just what you've said. In other words – there is no sense worrying. Go on with your life and do what you need to do.

As this mother you were chosen for a purpose. Today, you may think that whatever circumstances you are in, surely God can't use you - but He can and He will. Whoever you are, whatever your circumstances – God will use you if you willingly make the choice.

God was offering this mother a choice. God was saying, if you believe in me then provide for my servant first and you will never want – but first you have to trust me.

Now God could have filled the jars first to make it a lot easier. It is easy to believe when it's laid out in front of you – but that's not faith like the Bible defines.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us – it is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.

How many of you have it the wrong way round? When something goes wrong your prayer is – Okay God, if you resolve this situation, show me the way, provide help, food, housing, money – and if it all goes good, then I will believe in You.

This is not a true relationship with God the Father or Jesus His Son. Imagine doing that in a relationship you have – if you do all that I want and I am pleased, then we will stick together. If not, pack your bags. When God calls we all have a choice. Maybe you can understand what this mother was feeling. She had nothing left - and she was being asked to give what she did not have.

You know, when we are at our lowest, God will always find a way to speak to us. An opportunity to believe that God could and would provide. An opportunity to step out in faith.

This mother was willing to give her last away in order to prove her faith and God's faithfulness. Her actions said, "God, I have faith in you, I believe you enough to give you everything I have". Then God worked His miracle.

Elijah told her that because of her faith, God would ensure she had a continuous supply of flour and olive oil until He sent the rains to grow the crops again. And this famine and drought lasted 3 years.

What a great message for difficult times – don't worry, share and have faith.

Now here's the thing – God didn't deliver 20 jars of flour to the mother the next morning. She didn't open her pantry and find 20 jugs full of oil either, she would not be able to see where her sustenance was going to come from. Instead, she would have to trust God for His provision.

This mother shared of all she had left having faith in God. She used the little flour and oil and provided for Elijah. Then there was truly nothing left in the cupboards. She may have thought I really have nothing left

and my son will die because I shared and didn't say no – but that difficult choice meant that her and her son would survive the 3 years of famine and drought.

God asked her to give and she said yes. And as we see for this mother, sharing revealed she had put her trust in Elijah's God and not in her own limited resources.

2 Corinthians 9:8 states: God will generously provide all your need. Then you will have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

God tells us in **Proverbs 22:6 – direct your children to choose the right path and when they are older they will not leave it.**

I wonder what her son thought when she returned home, taking the cup of water and giving it all to this man Elijah. Had he given up, was he thinking his mother had lost it or did he trust in her? Did he observe her actions?

Whether we have children or not we all need to be a good example to the children in our midst. We need to show we care about the welfare of others; that we always show a caring, loving attitude towards our brothers and sisters in the Lord. If we don't give to the work of God, then we can't expect our children to. Children pick up more than we realise – they hear and see everything we do and it is stored away in their memories.

And through this example, we are then providing Spiritual training for the children because if we don't how are they going to have a personal relationship with God?

So this mother put her faith in God, a God that she didn't know before and her and her son survived. God rewarded her for her faith.

There are many opportunities and it all comes down to us providing the best example that we can. Saying grace before a meal; reading the Bible together or praying together; exemplifying by your language, behaviours and actions.

We can't force anyone to believe, they need to make their own decision to follow God. But we must show them the way and trust God to do the rest. We all have been given free will – we cannot live their lives for them, we can't get them saved if they don't want to.

Today, Mothering Sunday I know there are many families that are fractured in some way. I urge you, if you have lost connection with your children, parents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews, don't push it aside. At some time it will be too late.

The best gift a child can give a parent is the knowledge that they know Christ as their Lord and Saviour. God is faithful, and He will never make a promise that He can't or won't keep. Maybe there are times that you feel that your children or other members of your family may never come to know Christ. But don't stop praying.

Matthew 21:22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. ”

Mark 11:24 Listen to me! You can pray for anything, and if you believe, you will have it.