

## Always Enough

24<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Pent. – 11/17/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: 1 Kings 17:8-16 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 16, “**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.**”

### **Introduction**

✘ A very common temptation when we hear these wonderful stories in Scripture like the one in our Old Testament Reading this morning is to think of them as just that – a wonderful story and nothing more. To do so though is to place it in the same category as a Mother Goose fairy tale or a Disney movie or the like.

➔ But of course we can't look at this story in the same light as those, because of its source. This story is a part of God's Word; His inerrant and perfect Word; His inspired revelation given through His Prophets and Apostles for the purpose of calling people to repentance and faith; with the power also to strengthen and grow those of us already in the faith unto everlasting life at Christ's glorious return.

✘ To put it simply, you and I must apply this story to our own lives here and now today.

➔ So, for that to happen let's begin with a quick exercise. I'd like each of you to take a moment and think about things that you would never want to be empty. If you had your way, what would always be full?

➔ Maybe you're thinking of things like your coffee mug or gas tank or bank account or your own personal energy. Wouldn't it be great if these things never ran out?

➔ But honestly, has that ever actually happened to anyone, for real, and not just because your meal comes with free drink refills? The truth is it never happens. Our life-experience tells us over and over again that eventually things run out. They end up empty. What we have is gone. The cold reality of this earthly life is that there never seems to be enough, right? Never enough time; enough money; enough good health; enough fun. Never enough good leadership; enough accountability for “those” people; enough peace and good will ... you get the point.

### **I. Two stories of two widows**

✘ God knows our thoughts and concerns and struggles. This is not some new issue that we're talking about here folks, which is why we have the interesting set of Scripture texts before us today.

✘ The first is the widow in our Old Testament Reading who is on the verge of running out.

➔ Before we dive in the story, let's make sure that we have at least a cursory understanding of what's going on with our primary characters:

- At the end of 1 Kings chapter 16, King Ahab marries Jezebel and together they do evil in the eyes of the Lord by leading the people away from God to worship other false gods.

- So God sends His prophet Elijah to pronounce His judgment on Ahab and all the land. That judgment is the prediction of a severe drought. When the prediction comes true, Elijah is then a marked man. So the Word of the Lord directs Elijah to go into hiding, where God miraculously meets his every need.

✘ Now our story begins where the word of the Lord sends Elijah to a widow in Zarephath, whom God says He has commanded to feed him.

- Elijah has learned by now to trust the Lord and do as he is instructed. The LORD says, “Arise, go” to a place outside of the Israel’s borders on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and verse 10 says that “he arose and went...”.
- All he knows is that God has appointed a widow there to feed him. He doesn’t know her name or how he’s supposed to recognize her. But as he arrives he sees a widow gathering sticks.
- His introductory line is “Bring me a little water...that I may drink” (v.10). To that request, the woman appears to respond favorably.
- ⊗ But when Elijah adds, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand”, things seem to get a bit dramatic. Why? Well, her situation is very grim. This widow has nothing to offer. The drought has left the land barren. And as a widow, she almost certainly had very little to start with.
  - Now she’s ready to prepare a final meal for herself and her son, as she says in verse 12, “that we may eat it and die”. To her, Elijah’s request is absurd and I suspect for a group of people here who are used to thinking as we said earlier that there’s “never enough” to go around we can understand her reluctance.
  - I bet we’d all probably do the same. After all it is the logical response; the right thing to do, isn’t it? ...
- ⊗ Then there’s another widow today in our Gospel Reading. Our same logic looks at her actions as something that is very hard to understand indeed.
  - Jesus was just walking in the Temple the day after He drove the merchants and money-changers out for turning God’s Temple into a “den of robbers” (Mk. 11:17), and the chief priest and scribes and elders began to put Him through a series of challenges; trying to trip Him up and disprove His authority. As Jesus sits down to rest He watches people putting money into the offering box.
  - And the camera zooms in on a poor widow. She’s virtually invisible – nothing more than an annoyance for the rich who are hustling to go about their daily lives. She pulls out two copper coins and with no fanfare; no pat on the back; no showy display she drops them into the treasury. The smallest drop in an ocean of offerings!
- ⊗ Again, our logic kicks in. Why would she do it? What is she thinking? If that’s all you have, why give it away? Our instinctive conclusion as we’ve learned it from our world and culture is, “it’s utter foolishness!”

## II. Human Logic

- ⊗ Two different stories, in two different readings from Scripture, but our human logic takes us to the same place.
  - If you know you only have enough for one last supper, don’t give it away. If you’re down to your last penny, you are now the charity case, so don’t give it away.
  - That’s how we think. We’ve all justified these things in our minds, “Of course God understands the nature of scarcity”. He is God after all. But the problem isn’t with God; it’s with us!
- ⊗ You see, scarcity prompts our instinctive response of preservation and protection. I remember growing up with parents who lived on farms during the depression and so we were taught, never ever throw away a plastic bag as long as it still holds water, and it was the same with all kinds of other things like rubber bands and twist ties and more. If a pair of jeans still fit someone in the

house there was no such thing as too many patches. And for us boys, crew-cuts where the only option for a hair style because that was the only style that Dad could cut for free.

→ Today we live in a different world, but the instincts are still the same. When things are scarce as we found out at the beginning of the Pandemic, trusting in others goes right out the window along with our logic. Remember the great panic over toilet paper? Preserve and protect your supply at all costs!

→ Now the supply chain issues are raising concerns again in certain areas because of a scarcity of employees. And our self-centered logic is beginning to rear its ugly head again. We are happy to feed the poor when our cupboards are full; happy to give, to donate, to tithe when the account is overflowing.

⊗ You see, the truth is that we tend to trust in our abundance. Yet, how often does abundance show itself in our lives as a hindrance to the way that God desires to work and show His great love in our lives?

→ Remember our Gospel Reading a few weeks ago? In Mark chapter 10 Jesus interacted with a rich young man, who asked what he must do to be saved. But when Jesus told him to part with all of the “things of this world” and trust only in Him for salvation, he went away sad. Why? Because his heart trusted in his abundance instead of God and His provision.

→ God has given us all the gift of logic, but sometimes the way we depend upon our human logic gets in the way of what God is trying to teach us.

### **III. Both widows teach us Jesus is enough!**

⊗ The stories of the two widows today teach us the same lesson: God uses scarcity as a doorway to trust. The only way these stories make sense is that they teach us, to trust in the Lord and His provision.

→ A widow obeys, and they all eat for “many days”.

→ We aren’t told what happens to the other widow, but Jesus would not have commended her for giving “out of her poverty” except to teach her and us that when we trust in the Lord, there is always enough!

⊗ Of course, that’s easier said than done. But God has been using scarcity to lead His people to trust in Him for a long time, so we really need to learn the lesson folks.

→ He provided manna in the desert (Ex. 16); He brought water from a rock (Ex. 17); with just five loaves and two fish, Jesus fed thousands of men, women, and children (Lk. 9:10–17). In that last incident remember, there was so much abundance that the leftovers were more than the amount they had when they started. Why? Because with Jesus there is always enough.

⊗ And that’s the most important lesson; it is the lesson that we struggle to learn as well. Jesus Himself is always enough! Just look at the cross.

→ That’s why Jesus came – to be enough; enough to pay the full price of our guilt and sin. He didn’t come and die just to multiply food to fill our stomachs. He came to pay the ransom that alone could restore and free our souls. Jesus came because of our spiritual scarcity to fill us to overflowing with grace and forgiveness.

⊗ In the Old Testament, we see that all of their sacrifices were never enough to permanently cleanse us from our sin. And so the scarcity of the sacrifices teach us instead to trust that our God and Creator provides for us all the sacrifice that would and could ever be needed.

→ In our Epistle Reading today, the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus Christ came to be enough. Chapter 9:26, “He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”. Jesus is always enough!

## **Conclusion**

✘ His full sufficiency was poured out upon you and me in our baptism. Romans chapter six assures us that it’s there, in baptism, that you have been joined with Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection. It’s there that you are credited with His righteousness, empowered with His grace, crowned with His glory, and loved with His never-ending love, and all of it in abundance.

→ So the next time you find yourself wondering if you have enough; enough to forgive for example, remember that with Jesus there is always enough! Or when you are down to the last dollar in your wallet and you hear of someone who needs a helping hand, remember with Christ there is always enough.

→ Scarcity is not something we Christians need to fear. Why? Because we are God’s children, redeemed by the One in whom we entrust our very lives for eternity. If Jesus is enough to save us and enough to get us to heaven, then with the things of this world, and with Jesus as our Savior there is always enough. Amen.