

Arise. Go. Dwell.

Introduction

This week, our Assistant Pastor, Sarah Taylor directed our attention to **1 Kings 17:1-16**. In this story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, which takes place during the reign of Ahab, a king of Israel, there was a great famine in the land. Elijah, a prophet of God had been hiding from Ahab, who was trying to kill him. The famine was severe and for a period of time Elijah is hidden and sustained by God Himself. He was placed by the brook Cherith, which translates to "winter stream" and the birds provided him bread and flesh in the morning and also in the evening. How beautiful it must have been to rest in the full assurance of God's provision. However, the bible goes on to share that 'after a while the brook dried up'. Have you ever experienced the end of a season of provision in your life? It might have been getting fired from a position you thought was secure or losing funding for a project that was dear to your heart, or even having your partner end a relationship you were still committed to. The good news is what might have looked like an end of God's provision to Elijah, was actually just a transition into a different experience of God's provision.

In verses 8 and 9, the Lord appeared to Elijah and said, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." What a powerful promise of God! He had commanded the widow to sustain Elijah. Well Elijah, being the honourable prophet that he was, obeyed God and went to Zarephath, which incidentally translates to 'place of refinement'. When he came to the gate of the city, he found a widow there gathering sticks. Elijah called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup; that I may drink." As she was going away to get the water, he called after her, saying, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." The bible doesn't give us any insight into how Elijah must have felt about it, but frankly, this woman seemed unable to take care of herself and her son never mind the prophet. She had to gather her own wood, get his water herself and after he asked her for bread, she confessed that she had only enough for one meal for her and her son. Man, if I was in Elijah's position, I probably would have had many questions for God. I might have wondered is this the right widow. Is this really where you sent me? Did you know that she can't even provide for her own needs? But regardless of what it looked like from the outside, this place of refinement, this Zarephath, was exactly where God ordained for Elijah to be.



I can't imagine that it was easy for the widow either. From her perspective Elijah is a stranger, some man, not even her husband or a relative, who seems to be demanding more from her than she is able to give. There is such a horrible famine in her country, that very few people have any food left, especially the poor. She is down to the very last of her flour and oil, and there is only enough for one more meal for her and her only child before they both die of hunger. When she explained to Elijah how desperate her situation is, he basically says, "Ok, just make mine first."...she must have wondered, 'what do you mean first, it's all I have'. There is no first and second, there is only this little bit of flour and oil. It was an immense act of faith for her to give all that she had to God's prophet first.

And hopefully we know by now that God rewards faith. The scripture goes on to say; "She and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah."

Getting Started

Read 1 Kings 17:1-16, 18:1, James 5:17, Luke 4:25 and answer the following:

1. What was the significance of the name Cherith (i.e., winter stream) and why did God direct Elijah to go there?
2. How long did the drought last in total? **James 5:17, Luke 4:25, 1Kings 18:1**
3. What is the significance of the name Zarephath (i.e., Refinement) and why do you think God directed Elijah to move from where he was comfortably ensconced by the Brook Cherith to go there? **1 Kings 17:8**
4. Even though God told Elijah in 1 Kings 17:9 that He had commanded a widow woman to sustain him, the woman didn't seem to know it. Is this a contradiction? How do you reconcile the fact that she was not expecting Elijah and didn't seem to have heard from God that he was coming?

Let's Get Personal

1. Have you ever experienced a transition in how God sustained you? What did that look like in your life?
2. What are some scriptures you can go back to when you find yourself doubting God's provision in your life?



Take The Next Step

This week, your assignment is to write down one doable concrete step of obedience, small or large, that you will consciously put into practice this week. (James 1:22: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”)

Have a great week!