

"God's Blessing of Life Never Runs Out"

Text: I Kings 17: 17-24

10/1/2017

Last week we looked at the O.T. Lesson for the day, which told us about the prophet Elijah, and how during a time of famine he found shelter with a widow and her son. We learned from that lesson that God's blessings never run out. This week we again take a closer look at our O.T. Lesson for today, which tells us more about Elijah's stay with that widow and her son. What we learn from that lesson is that the ultimate blessing of God is life, and that blessing never runs out. Let's look at that now together ...

As we do, we return to today's O.T. Lesson and hear again that:

" ... after these things the son of the woman (i.e., the woman we heard about last week: the widow of Zarephath) ... became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him (i.e., he was dead). She said to Elijah: 'What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!'" (I Kings 17:17-18)

The "these things" the writer is referring to there would be the past years that Elijah had stayed with the woman and her son, enjoying sustenance from them during the famine that the Lord had brought upon the land for Israel's sin of worshiping false gods. It's understandable how the woman must've felt toward Elijah- for one thing, her son was dead, and that brought upon her great grief; for another, his death seemed to come from Elijah, given that everything was O.K. before his arrival. Oh I know, everything was NOT O.K. before Elijah's arrival - a severe famine had struck the land, and the woman and her son were about to die from it. But still, when you're feeling grief, it can sometimes feel helpful to have someone or something to blame for it, and Elijah, being the new guy in the house, caught that blame.

It is interesting, though, what the woman says when she expresses blame toward Elijah; she says:

"You have come to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!"

Those words show an awareness, by her, of her sin. You see, the woman mentions there her iniquity, and iniquity is guilt that results from sin. She thinks that Elijah, being a man of God, is exposing her sin by giving her what she deserves for it: death (or in this case, the death of her son). That would seem to indicate that she understood in some way that she was a sinner, and that the ultimate consequence for her sin was death.

We know what happened next: Elijah took her son into the upstairs room, where he was staying, and after laying himself down upon him 3 times, brought him back to life. L Kings then tells us that:

"Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said: 'See, your son is alive.' Then the woman said to Elijah: 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.'"(vs. 23-24)

With that we have the completion of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and upon completing it I'm struck by something very simple but also very important - one word: "Now." The woman said, again:

"*Now* I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

"*Now* I know that you are a man of God." Q: Now what? A: Now that she had seen Elijah raise her son from the dead.

Think about it folks: Elijah had been living with the woman and her son for quite a while, possibly even a few years, and when he first came to them she thought they'd be dead shortly after eating their next / last meal. But they didn't die; they continued to live on with just very little food available to them, food which Elijah said would last until God sent rain upon the earth. And it did last! And wouldn't that have been enough to convince her that maybe this Elijah fella was a little different; wouldn't that have been enough to convince her that, as she said, the Word of the LORD in his mouth was the truth? Apparently not, for in today's text she says:

"*Now* I know that you are a man of God and that the Word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

Now I know, now that you've just raised my son from the dead. (paraphrase)

This is very similar to what happens in today's Gospel, where Jesus raises another person from the dead, this one the son of the widow of Nain. It's interesting that in that instance, similar to the instance of Elijah and the son of the widow of Zarephath, the miracle of resurrection elicits a response from people:

"A great prophet has arisen among us!"(Luke 7:16.Ⓢ:)

With those words the people in today's Gospel identified Jesus as a prophet in the tradition of Elijah, the Great Prophet that Moses had said would one day visit God's people. The people in today's Gospel recognized that *Jesus was God Himself*-

"God has visited His people!"(Luke 7:16b)

they said. It was the power to raise the dead that convinced both the people in Jesus' day, and the widow of Zarephath, that God was in their midst.

It's the power that Jesus used when He raised Himself from the dead that convinces US that IN HIM God is in OUR midst. In other words, it's all about Easter!: Jesus' resurrection from the dead makes all the difference. It is the difference; it's the difference even between death and life.

Folks, in a sense, in 1 Kings Jesus' resurrection actually jumps backward in time and breaks into the past dealing of God with His people. I say that because, in the next chapter of 1 Kings - in fact, in the very next verses of 1 Kings, God tells Elijah to go to Israel's king and tell him that He's about to send rain upon the earth. That means that, in terms of how the biblical story is told in 1 Kings, the famine ends with resurrection.

Israel's judgment by God ended with the resurrection of the widow's son from the dead, and our judgment by God - indeed, the judgment by God of the whole world - ended with the resurrection of God's Son from the dead. That means that the ultimate blessing God brings, to both widows and you and me, is life. As Jesus Himself said:

"I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."(John 10:10)

The ultimate blessing of God is life - the life of His Son, and that blessing never runs out.

That's important to know, because so much of our lives seem to be lived, as we said last week, in a time of famine. The "rain" of God's blessing often appears to fall on others, while the land beneath us is parched with the sin of our false worship. And yet God's Word rings out loud and clear, as we also said last week, calling us to faith in Him:

(Last Week) "The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the face of the earth."(1 Kgs. 17:14)

(This Week) "... the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived."(1 Kgs. 17:22)

The widow of Zarephath was concerned in today's text about her iniquity being punished with the death of her son. But from God's Word we learn that that was NOT the case, because *in the death of GOD 's Son ALL iniquity WAS punished ONCE AND FOR ALL*. Having come to faith in the God of Elijah, the widow of Zarephath didn't need to worry about her sins, not any more than we need to worry. Jesus has taken care of every sin, for us all.

Or to put it another way: in the Body & Blood of Christ the "flour" of God's forgiveness is never exhausted, nor shall the "oil" of His mercy ever run empty, until the Day the "rain"/reign of His Son (the rule of God in Christ) covers the whole earth. On that Day - the Day of the glorious return of Christ - the resurrection of Christ will exert its hold upon all creation, and all the dead will rise. Given that we have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we will rise from the dead to live the abundant life Jesus said He came to bring, and we'll see - along with the widow of Zarephath - that the ultimate blessing of God *is life* - the life of His Son, and that that blessing never runs out.

And on that note we conclude. In two of our Scripture readings today, God raises someone from the dead, and also in both of those readings, the people that witness those miracles become convinced that God is at work in their lives. We know God is at work in our lives because His Son has risen from the dead. We "see" Him by faith every Sunday in the Meal of the Resurrection known as His holy Supper, and that convinces us that we will see Him with our own two eyes on the Day of our own resurrection from the dead. Until then, we persevere, as did Elijah, through whatever hardship comes our way, trusting in the Word of our Lord, a Word that assures us that God's blessing is for us, it's a blessing of life, and it never ends - it never runs out. God help us live that life to the full –

In Jesus ✠ Name

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