

Portraits of a Prophet 2

8.6.23

1 Kings 17:8–16 (CSB)

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹“Get up, go to Zarephath that belongs to Sidon and stay there. Look, I have commanded a woman who is a widow to provide for you there.” ¹⁰So Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the city gate, there was a widow gathering wood. Elijah called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup and let me drink.” ¹¹As she went to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.”

¹²But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I don’t have anything baked—only a handful of flour in the jar and a bit of oil in the jug. Just now, I am gathering a couple of sticks in order to go prepare it for myself and my son so we can eat it and die.”

¹³Then Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid; go and do as you have said. But first make me a small loaf from it and bring it out to me. Afterward, you may make some for yourself and your son, ¹⁴for this is what the LORD God of Israel says, ‘The flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the surface of the land.’ ”

¹⁵So she proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah. Then the woman, Elijah, and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry, according to the word of the LORD he had spoken through Elijah.

Intro. [Living for the Lord can be confusing.](#)

A. Imagine Elijah who was told to tell King Ahab there would be no rain due to Israel’s sin.

1. Then God leads him to a Wadi, where ravens tend to him.
2. But then the Wadi dries up.

3. And God tells you to go to enemy territory and that God would provide for him there.

B. The plans of the Lord don't often make sense when you are in the middle of them.

1. Yet, when you look back, it's easy to see God's Presence, Peace, and Provision all along the way.

2. Today's passage is an amazing story of God providing from unlikely people in unlikely places.

3. If you find yourself in a place you hadn't planned for or anticipated, yet God has brought you there, this story reminds us that God never leads us to places where He isn't prepared to care for us.

1. God's provision in enemy territory.

A. Zarephath was north of Israel in unfriendly territory.

1. It was controlled by Jezebel's father, King Ahab's father-in-law.

2. This land had a long history of worshipping Baal.

3. This was hostile territory.

B. Yet God led Elijah there.

1. The Wadi wasn't comfortable, yet God met him there.

a. But perhaps God didn't want Elijah to become too comfortable or familiar in the Wadi.

b. Or, God knew that if the water kept flowing in the Wadi that Ahab would eventually figure it out and discover Elijah before his time.

c. Either way, God's presence and provision moved Elijah away from the Wadi to Zarephath.

2. Zarephath wasn't comfortable, yet it was where God had led him to be for the next two to three years.

C. Are you willing to give up comfort in order to experience Divine Peace, Divine Provision, or Divine Presence?

1. Rarely does God meet us in a comfortable place and let us stay there.
2. Rarely do we crave God's peace, provision, or presence when we have all we want.
 - a. P.T Barnum once said, "Comfort is the enemy of progress."
 - b. Too often, our comfort keeps us from seeking God as we should.
3. I was sharing with Pastor Larissa and Misty the other day.
 - a. And we agreed that this church is not a comfortable place.
 - b. This is not a place to come if you don't want to be challenged or engage in spiritual warfare.
 - c. If you want to remain comfortable in your Christianity, I do not recommend attending Licking A/G.
4. Don't ask for God's Presence if you want to remain comfortable.
 - a. For no person in Scripture who encountered God found it comfortable.
 - b. Consider:
 1. Jacob wrestled with God and had his hip displaced.
 2. Or Moses, who dropped to the ground and removed His shoes for the holiness of the Lord was there.
 3. What about Isaiah or John the Revelator, who fell to the ground like dead?

4. the Lord's presence blinded Paul.

5. Or Peter, James, and John, who walked away from the family business to follow Jesus.

5. God often leads us to difficult places to experience His Divine Presence, His Peace, and His Provision.

2. Just as ravens were unexpected sources of supply, a widow and her son were equally unexpected.

A. Please notice: This was NOT Elijah's idea.

1. He wasn't freeloading.

2. He wasn't stealing from a poor woman.

3. He wasn't taking advantage of her.

4. Religious leaders who take advantage of the poor for their own personal gain are crooks, not ministers.

B. In this encounter, Elijah is being taught a hard but wonderful lesson.

1. God can provide from any source that He desires.

2. God is not limited by our imaginations.

a. So often, we give God suggestions of how He can make something happen.

b. We conjure up ideas, believing that God needs our help to find a solution.

c. But Elijah would have never expected Ravens or Widows to meet his needs during a famine.

C. Why did Elijah ask this woman?

1. Because God told Him to.

a. God had gone before Elijah to command a woman to provide for him.

b. As Elijah walked the long and lonely road to Zarephath, God was making preparations in a strange, foreign land.

2. Word of caution:

a. Not everyone who says they have a word from God has a word from God.

b. I've had people curse me and prophecy my ruin.

c. Just because someone says God told them, it doesn't mean God really told them.

1. This is why you **MUST** know God's Word and the voice of the Lord.

2. This is why you must test everything, as John writes in the NT:

3. **1 John 4:1:** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

4. This is not a new warning or a new problem.

3. But in this instance, Elijah knew the voice and the word of the Lord, and he obeyed.

3. Elijah's and the widow's obedience resulted in miraculous provision for them both.

A. Let me paint the picture:

1. Elijah arrives at the gate of this foreign city.

a. The city gates are much like the courthouse squares used to be.

b. They were the focus of business, public debate, and the center of activity.

2. He finds a widow gathering wood which she would use to make one last fire for her, her son, and her household.

B. Elijah arrives in this very public space and asks the poor widow for some water.

¹⁰ So Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the city gate, there was a widow gathering wood. Elijah called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup and let me drink." ¹¹ As she went to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand."

1. She is willing to bring Elijah water, perhaps from a nearby well that has not yet run dry.
2. But when he asks for a piece of bread, brought from her "hand" or her provisions, she hesitates.
 - a. Here takes place a dance of faith.
 - b. Elijah has faith that God has, indeed, prepared her to provide for him.
 - c. The widow, with her limited knowledge, is having to trust that this man is indeed a prophet and not a crook.
3. I can't help but read this story through the lens of Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4.
 - a. There, too, the man of God was in want of water.
 - b. There, too, God used an unlikely woman to minister.
 - c. And in both cases, the women received far more than they possibly could have imagined.

C. The widow admits to Elijah that this was the last of their oil and flour.

1. The drought has led to famine, and widows and orphans would be the first to die.
2. Her response is not a lack of faith but an expression of reality.
 - a. She is not a Jew.
 - b. She does not have a personal relationship God.

c. She hadn't read the stories of the Bible because they were not yet written.

3. Yet, God had already prepared her heart to obey, and the reputation of the man before her was well known.

a. God isn't asking you for blind obedience because faith is not blind.

b. You may not have the details, but God gives us enough to be obedient.

1. We have Scripture that demonstrates God's faithfulness time and again.

2. The Holy Spirit who dwells in you confirms what God is asking you to do.

4. Walking in faith is often uncomfortable but not as uncomfortable as walking in disobedience.

D. In an act of faith and obedience, the widow makes Elijah some bread and brings him some water.

1. And that provision continues until the drought is lifted.

2. The widow was not harmed in providing for Elijah; she was blessed because of it.

a. God's economy does not run like ours.

b. This was not a win/lose, where Elijah eats, and the widow and her household starve.

c. But instead, God provides for them all.

3. Just like the young boy who brought Jesus loaves and fishes left having ate more than he brought, God blessed the widow in spite of her circumstances.

Divine Peace, Provision, and Presence.

4. Elijah was not the source of the miracle but the conduit.

¹⁵ So she proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah. Then the woman, Elijah, and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry, according to the word of the Lord he had spoken through Elijah.”

A. The woman obeyed Elijah because she didn't know the Lord.

1. Elijah obeyed the Word that he received from the Lord.
2. Elijah didn't conjure up this miracle, he didn't manifest this miracle, he didn't create this miracle.
3. He, too, was obedient to what God had asked him to do.
4. And Elijah was a man of prayer.

B. **James 5:13–18** is a familiar passage for many of us.

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

1. Notice that James emphasizes that it was because Elijah prayed that the drought took place, not because he was a spectacular man.
2. The Good News is that we all can pray.
 - a. Prayer is communication and partnership with God.

b. We all can pray.

c. James says that we all are invited to pray for the sick and see them healed and for the sinner and see them forgiven.

C. If God directs you to do something, be obedient.

1. What God initiates, He completes.

2. We partner with God through prayer, faith, and obedience.

Apply. What is God calling you to in this season?

A. Is God calling you to trust Him for great provision?

1. Can you imagine being the widow who faithfully each morning went to the flour jar and never pulled up dry air?

2. Can you imagine pulling up the jar of oil that you have had for two years and pouring out what you needed, and it never ran dry?

3. I don't know your specific situation, but is God calling you to trust Him like you have never before?

a. Perhaps you have been in tough places before.

b. But last time, you weren't a Christian.

c. So you put mountains of debt on credit cards, did illegal things, and anything else you needed to get by.

d. And now you find yourself in a tough place, but you are not the same person.

e. And now God is calling out and asking, "Will you trust me?"

f. The jar may not be full, but it won't run dry!

B. Is God calling you to His Divine Peace?

1. Elijah was not in a peaceful place, but he was in a peaceful position.

2. When you have God's peace, you can be content and whole even in the presence of your enemies.

a. King David said that God "prepared a table for Him in the presence of his enemies."

b. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11 that he had learned to be content in any and every situation.

3. God often grants His peace in the situation before He delivers you from your situation.

4. I'm praying that God will give you His Divine Peace no matter what battles you are facing.

C. God is calling all of us to be people of His Presence.

1. When Elijah walked into the room, people knew he was a prophet of God.

2. Is God not calling us to be people of His presence?

3. People who have been in the presence of God will be different than those who are far from God.

4. Never underestimate a person who has been in the Presence of God.

Prayer for God's Peace, Provision, and Presence