

Portraits of a Prophet 3

9.13.23

“Don’t let my hope die.”

1 Kings 17:8–24 (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.

THE WIDOW’S SON RAISED

¹⁷After this, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. His illness got worse until he stopped breathing. ¹⁸She said to Elijah, “Man of God, what do you have against me? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?”

¹⁹But Elijah said to her, “Give me your son.” So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upstairs room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰Then he cried out to the LORD and said, “LORD my God, have you also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her

son?" ²¹Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the LORD and said, "LORD my God, please let this boy's life come into him again!"

²²So the LORD listened to Elijah, and the boy's life came into him again, and he lived. ²³Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upstairs room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, "Look, your son is alive."

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD's word from your mouth is true."

Introduction: Have you ever felt like you take one step forward and two steps back?

A. This widow had ministered to the prophet Elijah

1. The most hated man in the land lived under her roof.
2. And God was blessing.
3. While friends and neighbors were dying from the drought and famine, she and her household were living by God's miraculous supply.

B. Then the worst happens.

1. Her only son becomes sick and dies.
2. How is it possible that God would allow something bad to happen after all she had done?

C. This passage is both hopeful and difficult.

1. Hopeful because it reminds believers that God does, indeed, intervene in the ways of man and does the miraculous.
2. Hopeful because the resurrection of a widow's son points us to the ultimate resurrection of Mary's Son, who made way for all of God's children to be resurrected at the end of days.
3. Difficult, because we are reminded that sickness and death remain part of the human existence, and will till Jesus returns.

Let's turn our attention to this text.

1. Why the spotlight on the son?

A. This may seem cruel, but lots of people were dying at that time.

1. Jesus refers to this story in Luke 4:25-26

Luke 4:25–26 (CSB)

²⁵ But I say to you, there were certainly many widows in Israel in Elijah's days, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months while a great famine came over all the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.

2. This causes me to dig a bit further.

B. Often, this verse is interpreted that the boy is the widow's only child.

1. But the language of the text suggests there are others in the household, but only one son.

2. It would not be out of bounds to assume that there were some daughters and perhaps even members of the deceased husband's family.

3. This is not a guarantee, but there certainly appears to be more than the widow and her son.

4. Why the spotlight upon the son?

C. Because the father had died, the son was now the man of the house.

1. The son embodied the hope for the future.

2. If he doesn't survive, the family lineage dies.

3. If he doesn't survive, the hope for a future dies with him.

4. The family name, the family heritage, and the family hope are tied to this boy.

C. No parent wants to face the death of a child.

1. Yet, there is an additional level of panic in this situation.
2. The boy is the embodiment of hope, and now that hope has died.
3. The woman takes her complaint to Elijah, the man of God.

2. The widow blames Elijah because he carried the Word of the Lord and the Sword of the Lord.

¹⁸She said to Elijah, "Man of God, what do you have against me? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?"

A. Where this prophet went, people died.

1. He was seen as the source of the land's trouble.
2. He was the messenger and voice of God.
3. So the woman takes her frustration to the man of God.
 - a. This is a great step of faith for her.
 - b. She is recognizing this man and his God.
 - c. Thankfully, believers can take our own prayers and requests before God and do not need an earthly intermediary.
 - d. But she couldn't, so she went through the Man of God.

B. **Man of God "implies a divine messenger."** (TOTC)

1. This woman, like most people, believed that death and sickness must be punishment for some hidden sin now brought 'to the light'¹
2. This theme is common throughout Scripture:

¹ Wiseman, Donald J. 1993. [1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary](#). Vol. 9. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- a. Job's friends all believed that Job's trouble was due to hidden sin, although it was not true.
- b. The disciples believed the man born blind was stricken because of either his sin or his parents. (John 9)
- c. Even today, many Christians practice a religion that attributes all sickness to hidden, inward sin.

3. This isn't always the case.

John 9:1-3 (CSB)

9 As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him."

C. Elijah hurries to do what he can do.

1. Elijah never brags that he could resurrect the boy.
2. Instead, he takes the boy before the Lord.

3. When all hope is lost, go to Jesus.

1 Kings 17:19-22 (CSB)

19 But Elijah said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upstairs room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. **20** Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "LORD my God, have you also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?" **21** Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the LORD and said, "LORD my God, please let this boy's life come into him again!"

22 So the LORD listened to Elijah, and the boy's life came into him again, and he lived.

A. **Elijah doesn't assume, but he does believe.**

1. He gathers the boy and takes him upstairs **to his** room.

2. He then lays him **on his bed**.

3. Then he cries out, "Lord, my God."

B. Elijah is calling upon a God that he knew.

1. Elijah was no stranger to the Lord.

2. So he removes the boy from the rest of the household and takes him to the place where the prophet had been praying.

C. I don't want to overstress this, but consider the following:

1. This is not a Jewish household, so there could still have been idols around.

2. She was not a believer yet, and so her faith is still in its infant stages.

3. This wasn't the New Testament, and so access to God was limited.

4. Therefore, Elijah moves the boy to his room, to his bed, and then brings him before HIS God.

D. Jesus does something similar in Mark 5 and Peter in Acts 9.

1. In all these instances, the unbelievers and crowds are put outside so the man of God can pray with the person.

2. It seems that in all three instances, they **protect the atmosphere of faith.**

3. It seems important that we, too, protect the atmosphere of faith.

a. It is ok to be picky about who prays for you or speaks into your life.

b. Elijah is serious about prayer, so he takes the boy away to pray for him upstairs in the room that has been bathed in prayer.

E. When all hope seems to be lost, go to Jesus.

1. Have a place where you meet with him regularly.
2. Have a place that has been sanctified and set apart.
3. Then take your need to Jesus.

4. This is the first time a miracle of resurrection is mentioned in Scripture.

A. As far as the Bible tells us, this is the first time someone is raised from the dead.

1. It happens again in the life of Elisha.
2. Jesus raises a few from the dead in the New Testament,
3. But this is the first resurrection story in the Bible.

B. What's interesting about this is:

1. First, it wasn't a Jewish kid who experienced resurrection first, but a "foreigner."

a. I can't help but notice that wherever faith and God's power meet, God is willing to do miracles.

b. God's power isn't dependent upon who you are or where you come from.

2. Second, God raised this boy back to life in response to Elijah's prayer.

²²So the LORD listened to Elijah, and the boy's life came into him again, and he lived.

a. When James wrote about this in the NT, he said Elijah was an ordinary man, but he was a man of prayer.

b. God does not need you to be extraordinary, but He does want you to be a person of prayer.

c. In the days to come, what would happen if every one of us increase our prayer time by 10 minutes a day?

1. If you pray none, then add 10 minutes to your day.
 2. Or if you pray for 30 minutes regularly, make that 40.
 3. But what would happen within us and around us if we became the people of prayer we are invited to?
3. Third, the resurrection led to the widow's belief in God, not the flour and oil.

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD's word from your mouth is true."

a. We would think that the flour and oil not running dry would be proof enough.

b. **But miracles of provision are never enough to lead people to a saving faith.**

1. Jesus chided the disciples in Matthew 16 for not believing and understanding AFTER eating of the miraculous loaves and fishes.

2. Israel did not believe even After eating of manna from heaven and water from the Rock.

c. **The widow's faith came not from believing in the supply but in believing in the resurrection.**

1. And isn't that for us today?

2. The place to begin our belief in Jesus is in believing that He was raised from the dead!

3. This is where the Apostles started.

4. This is where the early Church started.

5. This is why Stephen was stoned, and Paul was arrested and persecuted.

Apply: Do you believe that God raises from the dead?

A. Do you believe, first of all, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead?

1. Because this is the place where faith in Jesus must begin.
2. If you do not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and that at the end of the age, He will raise us with Him, then you are not a believer and follower of Jesus.
3. The Resurrection is the linchpin of Christianity.

B. Because of Jesus' resurrection, Do you believe that Jesus resurrects dead and dying hopes and resurrects dead things?

1. In this room this morning, there are those of us who have given up hope.
2. We have given up hope of healing, or restoration, or refreshing.
3. Yet God is able to bring His Divine Peace, and his Divine Provision, and His Divine Presence to any person, in any place, at any time.
4. But we must believe.

Prayer.