



Fear Is Not Our Future

Lessons From Elijah And Elisha

Growth Group Curriculum

January 15, 2023 – 1 Kings 17:7-16; 16:29-33; Acts 28:1-2; 32:44-47; Luke 4:16-22; Luke 4:23-30; 1 Kings 17:24
“The Gift Of Hospitality”

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

The drought that Elijah had foretold, in the first six verses of 1 Kings 17, is now in full effect. The brook had run dry and God had a new plan in order to provide for Elijah. He is told to go to Zarephath where a widow will provide him with food. This was likely around 100 miles from where Elijah had currently been staying.

He must make his way through Israel, where Ahab was looking for him, and then into the region of Sidon, Jezebel’s native land. Sidon is in modern day Lebanon. It is here, in the midst of the land where Baal is worshipped, that God will again show the nations, as well as Ahab, who is truly God. Baal has not been able to save this woman and child, but God will.

The story of God from the beginning was that He was not the exclusive possession of Israel. His blessing was to be a blessing to others. See Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:15-18. Israel was to be a witness to the nations. When Ahab made Baal the official religion of the northern kingdom, he was saying that the God of Israel was not for the nations and could not save them. Thus, the judgment of God fell on the nation of Israel.

God’s plan must have surprised Elijah. Why wouldn’t God provide food and water for him in Israel, or from a widow in Israel? Certainly, there could have been an easier way. Yet, God was teaching a bigger lesson about God’s mercy. God cared for all the nations and had a bigger plan. This is why Jesus references this story in Luke 4, when he returns to Nazareth and is teaching in the synagogue.

This passage teaches an important lesson about hospitality. The widow must not only see Elijah, but she must also be open to meeting his need. As she provides, God also provides. Yet, the passage also teaches us about faith and trust. God was hoping that Israel would come to have the same faith as the widow, who confesses her faith in 1 Kings 17:24 when she says to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”



Exploring the Text

1 Kings 17:7-16

⁷Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹“Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” ¹⁰So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” ¹¹As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” ¹²“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.” ¹³Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’” ¹⁵She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

Acts 28:1-2

¹Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. ²The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

Luke 4:16-22

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” ²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

Luke 4:23-30

²³Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’” ²⁴“Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy^[a] in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

1 Kings 17:24

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

1. In 1 Kings 17:7-16, we read the story of Elijah and the widow from Zarephath. Pastor Paul told us that this scripture is a story about a miracle of provision. What did you learn about God from reading this story? Are there applications for your life from what you learned?

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2. The title of the sermon was “The Gift of Hospitality.” How do you define hospitality? Why do you think it is important to show hospitality to others?
3. In Acts 28:1-2, we read of the Apostle Paul’s ship wreck on the shores of Malta and of the “unusual kindness” the islanders showed to the men who were shipwrecked. Pastor Paul told us that “unusual kindness” comes from the word philanthropia which translates into “love of humankind.” What do you think “unusual kindness” looks like in action? Has anyone ever showed you “unusual kindness”?
4. As you read Luke 4:16-22, what do you think God is calling us as Christians to do?
5. Pastor Paul referred to a sermon preached in 1966 by Dr. Martin Luther King entitled “Guidelines for a Constructive Church” based on Luke 4:16-22. Pastor Paul told us that in this sermon, Dr. King said that we have learned how to make the world a neighborhood, but we haven’t figured out how to make it a brotherhood or sisterhood. What do you think Dr. King meant by that? What do you see in the world that would make you agree with Dr. King?
6. Pastor Paul told us that in Luke 4:23-30, Jesus was prodding the people around him because they thought they knew what the Messiah was supposed to do and they were unhappy with him because he wasn’t behaving as they thought he should behave. Pastor Paul called this “putting God in a little box.” What does it mean to put God in a box? Why do you think people put God in a box?
7. Kindness is a gift from God but it is not a gift that is given to us all at one time. It requires practice and intentionality. How can we learn to practice and to be more intentional about demonstrating kindness to others? How can we learn to pay more attention to what is happening around us and then demonstrate God’s kindness to others?

