

There was a drought.

God said to Elijah, "Go east and hide in the Wadi Cherith. You shall drink from the stream, and I have commanded ravens to feed you there."

Elijah . . . great prophet and servant of God . . . trusted God and did as God said. There he drank and ate.

After some time, the brook ran dry.

God told Elijah, "Move on to Zarapath and stay there. I have designated a widow there to provide for you."

As always Elijah trusts God and goes to Zarapeth.

There we pick up the story in our first reading. Elijah meets the widow and asks her for water and food.

Then we hear this heartbreaking reply from the woman. Because of the drought she is down to her last meal for herself and her son.

Is the prophet, Elijah, being insensitive? If we don't know the whole story we might think so . . . but, no . . . he's not. He's doing what God has told him without question.

We can imagine how he felt when he heard the woman's response.

So he offers her what he himself has learned to be the truth and he tells her, "Do not be afraid!"

Very important words when trusting God!

He says to do what has been asked and then you can eat. He tells her that God has said that neither she nor her son will go hungry.

Now we can probably assume that the widow was to some degree aware that Elijah was a prophet of God. At the very least she has heard him say that God has spoken to her . . . and now she is faced with a choice . . .

. . . a choice none of us would care to make in her place.

She is being called into the realm of the Kingdom of God where God will provide for her needs. She chooses to trust the Word of God.

Incredibly she prepares her last bit of food and gives it to Elijah.

Such an astounding act of trust in God! In response, God feeds her and her son for a year with a jar of flour and a jug of oil that never run empty until the drought ends.

Here we are, thousands of years later, and we might be in a frame of mind to ask the question . . . “Why has God never done such a thing for me?!”

“I have needs. I have problems. Life is hard. Where are the miracles that will nourish and sustain me? Why has God never done such a thing for me?”

A very poignant question.

Elijah . . . or some other person of God . . . might respond poignantly...

“When have we trusted God to that extent?”

When have we chosen to enter the realm of the Kingdom of God . . . done what God has asked us to do . . . and trusted our lives and existence to God?

We have heard the Word of God . . . even more than the widow of Zarapath did. God has spoken to us through his Son Jesus. He speaks to us in the sacred scriptures . . . the Gospels . . . the letters of the Apostles . . . the prophets of old . . . our priests . . . our Church fathers . . . we have the Holy Spirit speaking to our spirits. We hear directly from God how we ought to live our

lives . . . how we ought to treat others . . . and how we ought to treat the world.

Sadly . . . the world is a mess. It's easy enough to see, if we dare look.

And certainly none of us are perfect. But how is our treatment of others? . . . How closely does our life model the standard that Jesus set forth in His own life? How much are we doing what God has asked us to do?

Living good lives requires that we trust what God has said to us and put it into practice. (simple)

Ah . . . but trust is very difficult for us. The standards that God sets out for us are often tough . . . tough because they are so radically different from the standards that the world sets out . . . the standards that are so easy to fall into.

The world defines wealth, security, happiness and responsibility far differently than they are defined in the Kingdom of God . . . and we can quickly find ourselves ridiculed by the world if we choose to trust God first.

If the widow of Zarepath had had an audience of onlookers, what do you think their response to her would have been?! Would they have advised her to give her last bit of food to this zealous stranger? Probably not.

Most likely they'd have advised her to get real and save herself for one more day and let this itinerant find his own food.

But perhaps she was poor enough . . . desperate enough . . . close enough to the edge of death . . . that she could see life when it was offered to her. So she trusted God.

It's very difficult to trust . . . yet if we don't trust God . . . then there's nothing.

There will never be enough food . . . enough wealth . . . enough security . . . enough happiness . . . enough of anything.

If we don't trust God there will never be peace . . . or justice . . . or compassion . . .

. . . there will never be salvation.

As I said . . . in this story there is a drought. Does anybody wonder how the drought came to be?

Well, it turns out that the land of Judah had had a string of bad Kings . . . doing evil in the sight of God. But Ahab, the current King of Judah, “did more to anger the Lord, God of Israel, than any of the kings before him.” He sinned greatly to the point of leading many of the people to worship the idol Baal.

God foretold through Elijah that he would withhold the rain . . . and even the dew . . . from the land of Judah. God was punishing the people for their behavior. And the behavior of the nation showed a great lack of trust in God. He wanted to bring them back to an awareness of who is who in creation.

This is certainly something for us to think about today . . . as a nation . . . as a community . . . and as individual households. How can we expect the grace and miraculous care of God’s kingdom unless we trust God dramatically (radically) and choose to live in God’s kingdom?

As I’ve said twice . . . it’s difficult to trust . . . especially to trust radically. But God loves us . . . and wants to love us radically . . . if we will only choose it. It seems a far better choice to trust in such a love than to trust in anything else.

In closing, for anyone who might be wondering what might be a radical offering of trust in God . . . there are as many ways as there are individuals. Most of the time it comes down to just doing the right thing.

But I'll offer three examples of things that will open the doorway to the Kingdom of God:

- Married couples can get together and decide to put a monthly donation to charity in their budget . . . not from their surplus . . . but in their budget. The kids can be invited to be a part of it as well.
- Families can come together at home, maybe after Mass, and decide to honor God by dressing modestly and chastely. Each person could go through the closet and get rid of anything that is inappropriate dress. How/determine? Well . . . would the Virgin Mary wear it? Would St. Joseph wear it? Would they wear it in public . . . or up the aisle to receive our Lord in Communion?

(Then maybe go shopping as family for a new outfit to begin a new life in the Kingdom of God.)

- Come together as a family and choose to re-direct our entertainment to remove those things which promote violence. Violence is not really gratuitous and has no place in the Kingdom of God. Our homes can be a haven and source of peace if we choose it.

An offering of three seeds that can grow if we want them to. Three seeds that will raise many questions and many eyebrows.

Three seeds that will help to establish us in the Kingdom of God. .

where God is trusted . . .

. . . and miracles happen . . .

And remember the words of the prophet Elijah . . .

. . . Do not be afraid.