

Story Time pt4

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Story Time / 1 Kings 17:8–24

Sometimes in the middle of our own misery, God gives us the ability to serve someone else. Since it's founding the church has excelled at this. While being persecuted, the church found ways to love their oppressors. In the midst of plague, the church served the dying. In oppressive regimes, the church cared for those more targeted than Christians.

We come from a long line of people who have seen their own suffering as a platform for the Gospel.

What if, God had a plan for your suffering that you could not even see? What if He was using your suffering to bring about your salvation? What if the call to serve led to you being served in an even greater way?

1, 2 Kings (3) Elijah's Miraculous Powers (17:7–24)

Cohn observes that the next three stories “form a clear literary sequence in which the author charts the rise of Elijah's prophetic powers. In each episode he confronts an increasingly more difficult problem which must be solved

With all that in mind, come with me to [1 Kings 17:8-24](#) this morning. We are going to see 2 episodes in the life of Elijah that hammer this idea home. **God asks us to serve sometimes to allow us to be served in an even greater fashion later.**

Now here is the setting. There is a massive drought and famine occurring as a result of God's judgment on the evil king Ahab and his wife Jezebel- who have led Israel to worship Baal. There is no rain coming until God says so, and God has to this point provided for Elijah, His prophet, with a brook to drink from and ravens to feed him. But in verse 7 that brook dries up and Elijah is thirsty and hungry.

1, 2 Kings (3) Elijah's Miraculous Powers (17:7-24)

Here God's people will fare better than Baal's. F. C. Fensham asserts that in fact the main purpose of this narrative is **"to demonstrate on Phoenician soil, where Baal is worshiped, that Yahweh has power over things in which Baal has failed."** Since Baal worshipers explained the drought as a sign that Baal was dead, he could not help the widow and her son. "In the absence of Baal who lies impotent in the Netherworld, Yahweh steps in to assist the widow and the orphan, and this is even done in the heartland of Baal, Phoenicia." **It is also done in Jezebel's native land.** Because Yahweh exists and Baal does not, Elijah possesses power Jezebel and her prophets do not

Go with me to verses 8-9.

God always has a plan for His people in the midst of hardship. God does not fail to provide for His people who are obeying Him, even when all else seems impossible. In this case, God is going to use someone else, someone Elijah does not even know to provide for him.

Look at verses 10-12.

When Elijah arrives at the town of Zarephath, he meets a widow- exactly who God told him to find- and she is gathering sticks for a fire- but her purpose is grim. She is getting ready to cook the last meal for herself, and her son.

Folks, this lady is on her last legs. She has given up. She is resigned to her suffering and death and that of her son.

And when Elijah shows up, initially she is ok getting him a drink, but she draws the line at food. This is going to be her son's last meal. They are done.

Have you ever been done? Ready to just give up and die or quit or surrender? You know how that felt. The overwhelming events of life have crushed you. And you have no reason to go on.

Imagine if in that moment this guy shows up?

Church, I get it. Trying to serve at our lowest is brutal. But we have a lesson here for all of us, there may be someone in our life worse off than us who we can serve.

Elijah has nothing. No last meal. No water. Nothing. And this woman has enough to meet his need.

God will not send you someone whose need He has not equipped you to meet. But to meet that need, you are going to have to trust Him and not your own abilities or resources.

Look at verse 13-14.

Elijah asks her to trust God. Not herself. Not her resources. God. To be enough for BOTH of them- Elijah and the widow and her son.

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When Elijah encounters the widow, he discovers that the drought has reduced her resources to a bit of flour, a dab of oil, and a few sticks of wood. She expects to starve to death along with her son. Elijah promises that her flour and oil will not run out until the drought ends. This promise comes true, so the widow and her son are saved by this miraculous provision. **God's people have what they need and what Baal cannot provide**

Church we have the limitless power and resources of Jesus to access. When we have the opportunity to serve- even at our lowest- we have to lean into that power. Or else it is not happening.

I truly wonder, **if God sends us people to serve at our weakest so He can show His strength to both of us.**

Now what is wild here is the widow sees God's power in this moment. Verses 15-16 tell us she did not just see it on this day, but on EVERY day afterwards. She is provided for every day- by the power of God, not her own hand. And so is her son.

Which is about to become VERY important.

This episode leads to another. One that the woman is helpless to do anything about, but which Elijah is uniquely gifted to address.

Go to verses 17-19.

The widow's son- while Elijah is there- gets sick and dies.

Whoa.

The woman had been preparing earlier for her son's death, but now she has prepared for his life and it is gone. She has the food but now another tragedy has come up and she is powerless against it.

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The woman fears her sin has brought about her son's death and wonders if Elijah has been sent to punish her. Perhaps if he had not come, her son would have lived (forgetting, of course, that he would have starved)

Church I know some of us have been here too. We are coming out of one awful season thinking we are in the clear and bang out of nowhere comes the coup de grace and we are somehow lower than we were before.

This widow has only her son- she thinks- to count on as she ages. He is her future. And he is gone.

And she even lashes out against Elijah- the prophet of God who has given her the gift of food- she is angry and broken and destroyed.

And Elijah is determined to intercede. She has been there for him. He will be there for her.

Church this is who we are. **We are people who move from being served to serving, From being needy to being able to meet the need. We are both/and because our God is limitless and as His people we are called to be like Him.**

God is not leaving you alone in your hour of need. He is already moving to deliver you.

Look at verses 20-23.

Elijah intercedes with God on behalf of the son and his mother.

1, 2 Kings (3) Elijah's Miraculous Powers (17:7-24)

Elijah's faith in the midst of uncertainty allows God to use him to demonstrate God's life-giving power, his constant watchfulness, and his compassion even on those outside the elect nation (Luke 8:40-56).

Elijah stretches himself on the child, thereby seemingly transferring life from himself to the sick one. Regardless of the method used, the important fact is that God raises the boy from the dead. The child revives because Yahweh hears Elijah's plea, not because of the prophet's prowess. Yahweh is God, not Baal, not Elijah

When is the last time you pleaded with God for someone? Seriously. Not a one time toss up prayer, but a deep crying out for someone over and over again. Elijah is pleading for this boy's life over and over again and look what verse 22 says- God listened.

Church God can hear you, why would we fail to intercede for someone else???

And the result?? Church the son does not just live. Look at verse 24.

Her faith is restored. She believes.

1, 2 Kings (3) Elijah's Miraculous Powers (17:7–24)

the miracle helps the woman know that Elijah is a man who represents and is sent by the Lord. She understands that the same God who provided the oil has provided life for her son. Baal may be dead, but Yahweh is not, nor is her son. Hauser comments: "Thus, as the challenges by death grow in intensity, God himself becomes more actively involved in the life-sustaining process, no longer commanding others, but himself taking the initiative against death and overcoming death's challenges." Death cannot thwart Yahweh's purposes

Church souls can be on the line. Our calling to minister, even in the midst of our own suffering and need is an invitation to bring the truth to those who do not yet know and to strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters.

Will we be obedient to do that?