

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

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Today is Wednesday, October 23 and as we continue our focus on Christ the Cornerstone, we will study how God wants to move us from a posture of scarcity to a posture of abundance.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, I worship You in the stillness of a new day with a joyful heart. Help me hear the message You have for me. Speak to me through the power of Your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Wherever I find myself lacking or in short supply, show me the secret stores of abundant living You promise. Help me recognize Your presence in all today's circumstances and the goodness of Your bountiful supply. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

***Elijah 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?" As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." "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." Elijah 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. For 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.'*" She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry. 1 Kings 17:10-16a**

REFLECTION

The prophet Elijah had been living in the wilderness drinking water from a stream and being fed by ravens for nearly a year and then the stream itself dried up because of a severe drought (1 Kings 17:7-10). God sent Elijah into the land of his enemy to a town called Zarephath, deep in Baal's territory where Jezebel lived. God sent Elijah into the path of the very dangerous people he was fleeing. I imagine he would have preferred to run the other way. Additionally, I speculate Elijah was hoping for more promising room and board than what he found in Zarephath. Instead of someone who could really provide for him, God sent him to a woman who was poor, desolate and starving herself.

The widow of Zarephath had nothing. She was already poor in a time of severe drought in the land. She cared for a young son and they were down to their last morsel of food. She had no fuel but gathered sticks in the street at the edge of town. She had nothing to exist on but a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. If I was hungry and my child was starving and I was preparing to have my last morsel of food and some strange disheveled man

approached me and asked me to share my precious commodities in this time of scarcity, would I be generous? No way.

Fear is a common part of life. Everyone struggles with worry, fear and anxiety. Fear of the future, fear of the unknown, worry about what will happen, and what is beyond our control. God does not want His people to be afraid. We can replace our worry, fear and anxiety with trust, faith and gratitude. Elijah tells the widow to not be afraid, but trust in God. He tells her that the little jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry. That is not possible. Why believe him? But she did what Elijah asked, she trusted God. The three of them ate from that jar of flour and jug of oil for many days. It is one thing to trust God and be generous in times of abundance when everything is going well, the bank account is full and the pantry is overflowing. It is quite another thing to trust God in times of scarcity.

Ask: What resources do I worry I will not have enough of? Where do I find myself in short supply? Perhaps I need more faith, time, patience, courage or compassion? How can I learn to trust God to provide what I need?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, when I consider how I fill my shopping cart full of groceries, my car tank full of gas, and my pantry shelves full of food, these signs of abundance contrast sharply with the poverty and scarcity of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath. Yet in their time of hardship, they trusted in you to supply what was needed. Give me greater trust in what you can do in every aspect of my life. Whatever I need more of today - whether it be food, shelter, strength, help, healing, kindness, confidence or self-control, remind me to look to You to supply me in abundance. Amen.