



“Hold Out Your Hand”

Life wins. The good news of Biblical faith, good news into which we baptize Madeline; good news that will see her through all that life will throw at her and sustain her on her journey is that life wins; the power of God to give life is greater than all that the principalities and powers can throw at her.

We see this victory of God in an unlikely place; Zarephath isn't in Israel; it's in Sidon, a region in Phoenicia; Phoenicians worshipped Baal, the god who promised rain but since the Lord through Elijah said there would be no rain; there'd been no rain. Elijah had been weathering the storm out in the wilderness being fed by ravens, but now God wants him in Zarephath.

A widow will care for him there; she will provide for him. She will be his shelter in this storm. Why there? Why her?

The widow is one of “the least of these my sisters.” All she had was the house her husband had left her, and presumably some estate, and her son; but her husband was dead, the drought had driven up the price of food such that the estate was gone, so she was going to bake one last snack for the two of them, and then die. Death ruled her life; for her, death won, or so she thought.

The widow is “the least of these” in contrast to another woman from Sidon; a woman whose name is legend; Jezebel, the Queen of Israel who made the worship of Baal the worship of Israel; the Queen who provoked the Lord to remind Israel of just who they could trust by withholding the rain that Baal promised.

A Queen brought disaster; a widow will bring salvation; life wins. Worship the wrong god – drought and death. Worship the Lord; *1 Kings 17:14 (NRSV)* “*The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail...*”



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That’s the word of the Lord to the widow through Elijah; that’s God’s promise to her, and to Madeline, and to everyone when life becomes difficult: *1 Kings 17:14 (NRSV) “The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail...”*

This doesn’t mean that we won’t go through hard times, or that God will give us everything we want. This word is spoken in the midst of a drought after all! It does mean that God will supply our needs; God will be with us even when we find ourselves in over our head in a strange place where everything is different and nothing is the same: *1 Kings 17:14 (NRSV) “The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail...”*

That’s easier said than done; it would be a lot easier for the widow to believe that word if Elijah had a jar of meal and a jug of oil with him; who doesn’t prefer seeing and believing to “*do not be afraid*” hold out your hand? It would also be a lot easier if the problem went away; a little rain would solve everything, but we are in the midst of something a lot bigger than ourselves; the reign of God in this world; resurrection and life conquering death.

The widow is our guide through it all; she shows us that faith is not an escape; it is a way through. She believes the word, and when Elijah asks her take the last of her grain and oil, make him a snack, and hold out her hand with it; she bakes, she believes, she holds out her hand; and life wins.

You see, this is how life wins; this is how the kingdom comes; a queen is checkmated by a widow; a god of rain dries up but at God’s word, the jar of meal does not empty, the jug of oil does not fail; and today, an infant is baptized and grace is given before she knows what any of this means. The kingdom comes.



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Let the widow be your guide; draw strength from her witness; there will be droughts; there will be famines the land; there will be Baal’s and Jezebel’s and the Lord will deal with them. In the midst of it all, in the midst of God’s work in the world and its real impact on your life, hear the word of the Lord: *“Do not be afraid....” 1 Kings 17:14 (NRSV)* *“The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail....” “Do not be afraid.”* Life wins. Hold out your hand. Amen.

