

Enough
A Sermon for Sardis Baptist Church
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1 Kings 17:8-16
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If we listen, really listen, God reminds us that there will always be enough.

Today's lection tells us that Israel was in disarray. After Solomon's death, King Ahab had seized control of the Northern Kingdom. It's fair to say that King Ahab was as blasphemous as Solomon was wise. Ahab is the standard-bearer for infamous kings.

Elijah was a prophet, and he had the not-so-fun job of telling Ahab about God's displeasure with his governance, and God's corrective action for such behavior. "Because of your wickedness," Elijah says, "God is sending a drought – there will be no rain."

As you might imagine, Ahab does not like this message, nor does he like Elijah's tone, and Elijah flees for safety in the Wadi Cherith – the riverbed of the Jordan.

But there's enough. God gives Elijah enough courage to speak hard words to the king. And as the drought extends, God gives Elijah enough provisions to stay nourished: ravens bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and evening, and he drinks from the river.

But both the innocent and the guilty must endure the drought, and eventually the riverbed dries up. God tells Elijah, "There will be enough!" Today, I want you to leave this place, and go to Zarephath in Sidon, and I want you to wait out the drought there.

Now here's an important detail: Zerephath is in the home region of Jezebel, who is Ahab's Queen. This is NOT the place that Elijah would expect to find hospitality – the location is neither secure nor subtle.

And it gets better. God says, "When you get there, a widow's gonna feed you."

Got that? Hostile region. Terrible drought. Poor vulnerable widow. All the food you need.

Raise your hand if you would be inclined to believe that God was gonna provide enough.

Elijah does!

When he gets to the city gates, he sees a widow, and he asks her to bring him some water and a little bread. She tells him she can bring the water, but the bread she cannot. As a matter of fact, she is using her last little bit of meal and oil to make a final dinner for her and her son before they die.

But Elijah says, "Don't be afraid. God's gonna provide. Go on and make that meal for you and your son, but before you do, make me a small cake. And I promise you, there will be enough. Neither the meal, nor the oil will run out before the Lord makes it rain again."

And it was so!

Elijah, and the widow, and her son, and all in her household had enough to eat during the drought – the jar and jug provided again and again.

On the surface, the reader might believe that the miracle of this story is found in a magic jug and a magic jar. Perhaps they have hidden compartments, making God the best purveyor of cool party tricks the world has ever known. It's a cool trick to be sure. And a compelling story, one that would make for an Academy-Award-winning-movie.

But to spend so much time on the jar and the jug, is to miss the real miracle of this story. Somehow, somehow, God helped a stranger named Elijah find enough through the kindness of a widow, in the land of his enemies, in the midst of absolutely nothing. And somehow, somehow, God helped a widow procure enough kindness and enough faith to allow a stranger to be a witness to God's possibilities. And in this moment there was community. And there was enough.

Moses and Elijah and Jesus and Paul and so many others are witnesses to a truth: God helps us find enough, even in, especially in, places that appear to be nowhere, with nobody, with nothing.

If God can make manna in the wilderness, and never-ending pancake batter in a drought, can God not also offer provisions to us in the places we perceive to be barren? This story tells us that God will provide in strange places, in forgotten places, in unlikely places, in unruly places. There will be enough: enough love, enough faith, enough courage, enough provisions, enough of God's presence.

And should you ever need a reminder, look toward a table: "This do in remembrance of me." For here, you will find a place where God is always present, no matter how many of those little plastic cups we burn through. And here, you will find bread that is always available, whether you are Elijah, or a nameless widow, or a stranger, or an enemy, or even a doubter. The same enough-ness that Elijah found in the wilderness is the same enough-ness Christ offers at a table, right here in Charlotte.

Thanks be to God.