

November 7, 2021

1 Kgs 17:10-16; Heb 9:24-28; Mk 12:38-44

I have recently become even more aware of the power of God to provide for us, and also of how quickly our faith in God can fade when things go wrong. But God asks us to have total trust in God to provide. Look at the two stories of widows in the readings. One is seen by Jesus giving - literally - her last two cents into the temple treasury, the other takes what was left of her food and gave it to a stranger. Something may seem a little off about that. I mean, if you have only a little money shouldn't you save it for yourself and if you're short on food shouldn't you feed yourself and your loved ones first?

We certainly would want it the other way around if we were the stranger in the situation - we would want to be taken care of first. The biggest thing that gets in the way of following God in this is a failure to trust in God providing for us. There are many references in the Scriptures to God's providing. We hear in the psalms: *The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. ... How blessed is the one who trusts in You!*¹ But that's the hard part - actually trusting and believing that God can and will do something about the situations that worry us. That same God who fed Elijah when he is starving in the desert and who led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and being gave Manna in the desert when they would have starved. God shows over and over again that God has the power to provide for us. Jesus reaffirms this when he says: *Consider the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*²

In both stories we are presented with today, the widows are not the helpless victims of situations in their lives, they are the heroes in terms of showing faith in God. God does provide for them, as God has provided for me personally when there have been situations that I could not handle on my own. The widow at the treasury in the temple makes a big risk. She doesn't give her extra cash - like the rich do - but she gives all she has. The rich are sure to hold the better part back for themselves so that they can take care of themselves, so that they can win the favor

¹ PS 34:10; 84:11-12

² Luke 12:24 and Matt 6:31,33

of others by giving gifts, having nice clothes, throwing parties, etc. This widow risks not having her next meal. She trusts that God will care for her if she depends on Him. Jesus commends her giving all she has - holding nothing back for God. This holding nothing back is more than just about money, it also involves how we can hold back our time, our love, our energy, our very selves - God says to not hold this back - but this is something that is hard to.

Why so hard? Because we fear. ... You want to see a fearless person look at the window in the first story. She and her son are going to have their last meal and then they will starve to death. A stranger wants some of the food. She puts it out plainly to him: "hey, me and my kid are about to have our last meal, what do you want from me." She is clearly a woman of faith and explains her fear to Elijah. The first words he says are *do not be afraid*. To me this is powerful and strikes to the root of my being whenever I am in a situation that I can figure out - *do not be afraid*. She has a tremendous bravery to put her trust in the prophecy he speaks: *For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry*. She shares the last of what she had. Now ... some may say this is foolish - to essentially take the food from your child's mouth to give it to a stranger. But if she had not, she and her son would have had a bigger meal that day, then starved to death a week later. Giving up a short term satisfaction in love, generosity, and faith in God lead to a long term survival once God stepped in. Her reliance on God, her faith that if she gave of her need, not just of her surplus, that God would provide, her surrendering her fear in hope - all this allowed she and her son to not starve at all. I don't know about you, but I want to be more like these two women - to trust completely, to surrender to God totally, to face the inevitable temptation to give up when after surrendering it's not going the way we want. In the long run, God will bring things to a completion, in the long run God will provide!