

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

## *A Jar Never Empty*

## Old Testament Lesson

I Kings 17:1-16 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." <sup>2</sup> The word of the LORD came to him, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." <sup>5</sup> So he went and did according to the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi. <sup>7</sup> But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, <sup>9</sup> "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." <sup>10</sup> So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." <sup>11</sup> As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." <sup>12</sup> But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." <sup>13</sup> Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth." <sup>15</sup> She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup> The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

## Gospel Lesson

Luke 4:21-30 (NRSV)

<sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"<sup>24</sup> And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

## Bible/Sermon Focus

At the beginning of Jesus' formal ministry in the Gospel of Luke we don't hear him speak or have any specific stories until he preaches a sermon in his hometown synagogue. What the sermon lacks in length it makes up for in content. After reading a section from Isaiah 61, Jesus tells the people that the justice promised by God was finally at hand. And the people were amazed. But as our Gospel story continues this week Jesus has a couple more points to make in this homily.

Jesus indicates that his calling and his work function in a way that is like the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath; or like that of Elisha and Naaman the Syrian. Jesus *has* come to do God's work in the world. Just not there. Not at that moment.

We can resonate with why this message would have gotten under the skin of his community. After all, these were the people who raised him and who he had long term relationships with. They felt they too deserved the healings and miracles that Jesus had performed in other towns. They wanted the same for themselves. If, like in the story of Elijah, there were a famine, they wanted to be the ones with food. If stricken with leprosy, they wanted to be the ones, like Naaman, who are healed.

But our worth does not come from the fact that we are able bodied. And God's goodness is not only measured by the miraculous moments in our lives. Our worth comes from the fact we were created by God. Our promise of redemption and health is an ultimate one. It is in our every-day-normal humanness that we are called to live and move and do our work. And, as far as the love of God and the presence of God in our lives, the source is limitless.

Our calling is not to be everything to everyone. Jesus' very life shows us this. He is always moving from one town to another, but he doesn't do everything that everyone wants or thinks they need. And we, like those from Jesus' home town, should try to remember that we do not get to have exclusive access to who God is and what God does.

Today's scriptures teach us a lot of lessons about calling. Like Jesus' calling, ours will take us places that others may think we shouldn't go. And God will call us to communities that others don't think deserve us. Or like the widow's calling, we may think we don't have enough resources, but we do. God will provide and there will be enough. Like the servant girl who reached out to Naaman, we may be called to speak the truth of our God to a nonbeliever if it will heal them.

And as much as we may struggle sharing God with others, judging how they think God should and does work in the world, we may have to let those ideas go in order to witness to the amazing calling God has for all people.

## Discussion Questions

1. When is your calling the most difficult for you to live with?
2. How has your calling put you in contention with the communities who raised you?
3. Reflect on this quote from Pastor Andy, "Their insistence that God's power belongs to them needs to be tempered with the understanding that God's power belongs to all. And that simple reminder, that God's power belongs to all, makes them angry."
4. Have you ever overstepped your own calling or capacity and tried to be everything to everybody? What happened?
5. How does sabbath and rest play a role in your calling?

## Prayer

Holy God, remind us that it is not in our ability to do everything that we find our worth. Help us to discern the few simple things that you are calling us to and be in the world. Help us to give grace to others that don't meet our expectations so that we may be able to see your beauty and your presence in the, beyond our stubbornness. Guide us on our path towards the fulfillment of what you have created us to be in the world. Amen.

*"There were a lot of widows in Israel, God sent Elijah to the widow Zarephath. There were a lot of lepers in Israel, God sent Elisha to Namaan in Syria."*