

Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Our Old Testament lesson today is a well told story that again presents a single line that, when overlooked, not only changes our theological understanding of the story, but our greater understanding of God working in the world today.

You see my friends, our message begins today with the words: “Go now... for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” Elijah faithfully listens to the Lord and meets the widow, who has no idea, no insight to God’s plan and use for her. In contrast, her resources, her wealth, and her hope have all dried up. Before meeting Elijah, the woman is preparing to use the ‘last’ of all that remains before she prepares to go home and die.

For the widow, nothing remains, the end is in sight, and the bottom is in view. Things simply could not be worse when Elijah asks her for a morsel of bread to which she replied I have nothing prepared and not enough remaining to live. Now, the widow knows the ‘God of Elijah’ to make her point. Elijah in turn provides her the comfort and assurance that the ‘Lord her God’ will not allow her jar of meal or her jug of oil to run dry as long as it sustains the life of her and her son.

The faith of the widow (the ability for her to believe Elijah’s words) grants her the strength to go home and prepare the bread as Elijah has asked for: as the Lord has commanded. It is quite beautiful and at the same time... uneasy. You see, the ‘end’ was so close. If Hollywood ever captured this text and made a movie from it, the film would be a cliffhanger of epic proportions with a guaranteed sequel...because this could have ended so badly for a widow and her only son.

Everything was on the line for the widow and her son who were faced with a terrible situation. Then, in the midst of an already tragic and certain ending, an interruption comes along that could have take hours away from their last moments together. They are saved by a miracle; they are saved by faith; they are saved by the love of God.

A story like this could only happen in Holy Scripture because this is where we believe that God is able to do anything. A story like this would not have a chance in our society today because if someone did record an event like this, the scrutiny, the proof, the analysis and investigations would all lead us down a road that drew our attention to everything except the truth; except the miracle; except the glory of God alone.

And yet, the same exact story is being told right here and now my friends, in this place, in this community, with these people around us today. And it must start with the same words we might have overlooked, which appear at the beginning of the Old Testament reading; “Go now... for I have commanded my people here to feed you.”

My very dear friends in Christ, we are both the people who have been commanded to provide food and the ones who will be sustained and provided for because there is considerable work to be done; here and now. The question is not about an economy of resources, means, or wealth, but that of faith to believe that we are indeed provided for and sustained. We are here but for the grace of God to serve as we are called with the gifts and blessing we have been granted.

If we publish an article in the News and Record that details the miracles of God in the life of our congregation, would readers have the faith to see God's hand directing our lives? Would they see that God did not allow the jar or the jug to fail because we followed in faith and listened to His Word?

The jar and the jug did not fail; they provided. Like the manna in the wilderness, there was not an abundance that was stored-up, piled-up, or accumulated. The jar and the jug did not fail; they provided. Our Lord does not fail, but provides.

In closing today, I present a modern day parable that reminds us to think differently for the sake of what God is doing in the world and not what we can do. A man (Peter Block) presents a group of people with a tomato and asks them "how many seeds does this tomato contain?" After they are divided into groups and attempt to craft their analytical responses and guesses, the host simply tells them to stop and answers his own question; "there is enough."

The host explains there are enough seeds to save and plant next year and there are enough seeds to give to his neighbors so they too could have plants next year. The following year, there would be a larger abundance of seeds with even more to share with more neighbors. One tomato cannot feed a community, but one tomato can be the means by which a community has tomatoes to eat and share.

What appears [initially] to be an economy of seeds quickly becomes an abundance of seeds when viewed from the perspective of community and life together. The countless pumpkins that were recently carved for 'Jack-o-lanterns' each had an abundance of seeds, which were likely discarded. In contrast those seeds could be distributed and shared to where each member planted a few seeds to produce an even greater abundance of seeds the following year.

God's love, mercy, grace, and compassion for each of us are not economies that will run out or be used up? We will never see the end or bottom of the jar or jug when it comes to the generosity of God's gifts for us to serve one another. In contrast my friends, God does not fail; God provides. We serve and when we 'think' we see the bottom of our jar or jug, when we think the end is near, when we can forecast the last page; God does not fail; God provides.

God is faithful and calls each of us to be faithful in our living and service as well. We have been commanded to 'Love one another' and in doing so, God sends people to us that we are unaware of. And still, we continue to proclaim Christ in our lives, witness to the love of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and share the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Like seeds of abundance, we share our faith and grow together in the grace of God with the full assurance, promise, and hope of the peace that passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.