

Today's reading from First Kings, has a lot going on. In it, we're introduced to Elijah. We're introduced to the widow and then we're introduced to the Son. And It's important because Elijah's thought of as the second greatest Prophet in the Old Testament only behind Moses. So when you are reading through the Old Testament, they make a number of references to Elijah and what he's done. In the first part of today's reading, we get the idea of who Elijah is. We get an idea that he's a prophet from a small town and he's going through because God tells him to tell Ahab that if they don't stop worshiping Paul, he's going to make it stop raining. He's going to cause a drought, and it's kind of ironic that he's doing it like that because Paul is the god of storms. So if they pray to Paul, he should make it rain. God's saying, well I'm going to stop it. So you're not going to worship him.

Going to the wadi, well he means valley. So it's more like he's going to a little creek to try and get as much water as possible, while they're waiting. And the Raven is one of the birds that they're told not to eat in Leviticus. So the symbol that they're having with God giving the Raven to Elijah is more of an animal that can't be domesticated and is just doing God's will. That's what that first part is about.

Well, Ahab finds out about all of this and thinks that Elijah is some kind of wizard, some kind of mystic that's causing all these problems. So, he orders for Elijah to be killed and that's why Elijah disappears and goes to the wilderness. So it'd be like us going to Big Creek and having somebody want to come and get us and then we go off to Minnesota to get away from it all. So he goes and he goes into the wilderness, and he finds the widow that he knows he's supposed to find and she recognizes him immediately. Because remember in Leviticus, they tell them how to dress. So Jews are supposed to address one very specific way. So she's a gentile who sees him dressed like this and knows instantly that he's a Jew. And she keeps calling it your God.

Now the drought has already started. so she doesn't have a lot of water, and she's a widow which means she has even less position than anybody else. All of her belongings have already been split off with her husband's family. His brothers, his nephews have all gotten all of her stuff by this point. So she has very little to offer but she still does. She still gives it to this stranger who comes in and is asking for help. She's still doing the right thing, Because that's what she's supposed to do. That is the best thing. That's why she says that she's just going to make the one loaf of bread and wait to die because they have no water. They have no food, they have no means of getting warm. And Elijah tells her not to worry, we'll take care of it. God will provide.

So now a little later, more like three years later is when the third part of the story happens. The drought continues. This whole time, they've had nothing. They've had no water other than what God has provided to them and their flour and oil just keeps happening. It doesn't overflow. It doesn't become full in the jars. It's just enough that every day she has enough to make bread, and they do. Now she's still a gentile, she doesn't believe in our God. She doesn't believe that these things are happening. She thinks also that Elijah's just kind of doing something and she doesn't know what. She doesn't care what. She is still providing this hospitality. She's still helping this stranger, even though, I guess after three years, he's not really a stranger anymore, but she's still helping him.

Now her son dies. Everything is going wrong in this woman's life, but she doesn't throw Elijah out. She keeps helping him. She keeps providing for him and Elijah realizes that he needs to help her. He needs to pay back this hospitality that he's received. That's why he's laying on the child. He's trying to take his life force and put it into this boy. He doesn't understand about CPR and all that stuff. He just thinks, hey, if I can get my life out of me somehow into him, you'll bring this boy back. And it doesn't work. So finally, he prays and he prays and he asks God for his help. And God's like, got it, Fixes it. And that's when the woman says that he lives up to his name because Elijah means the Lord is my God. And he is. God listens to Elijah. He saves the child.

A lot going on in that little story, even though with Linda reading it probably felt like forever. But we see that we were meant to help people. We're meant to be like the widow, It's easy to be like Elijah and have our faith and say we're going to go and do this. And even though we know we might die, we might get in trouble. I still have faith in God. I'm going to accomplish these tasks. But this woman has no faith in God. She doesn't pray to the same God that we do. She prayed to the God who's supposed to make it rain and doesn't, She prayed to a god that's supposed to provide all these things for her and doesn't, But it doesn't stop her from helping Elijah.

She does the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Not because she expects payment. Not because she expects anything. She does it because it's the right thing to do. Eventually it works. This man, who she has no idea who he is, what he does or anything other than he just kind of rants and yells a little bit, goes and saves her son. She believes that it was God that put him in her spot, put her in his path. So that one day this would happen. She gets the rewards from a god that she doesn't believe in. So much that she eventually does believe. She repents for being wrong. If you realize, it's that life that she has led wasn't for what she believed it to be, but for what has happened. That sentence is very hard to get out of my mouth and looking at your faces, it's even harder to understand. But she finds out that there's something bigger in her life.

Even though all of her life, she's been struggling, she's lost her husband, she lost all of her possessions, she lost her son. Something bigger was meant to be, but you realize that through praying it came, even though she didn't pray, somebody else prayed for her. Somebody else returned, the hospitality that she had shared all this time. And God was listening. So many times. we think that God isn't listening, we think that he's so busy. He's so preoccupied with everything else. He doesn't have the time to pay attention to us, but that's not true. Sometimes we just have to pray a little harder for him to hear. Sometimes we have to pray for others. Some people that don't pray for themselves, the people who don't realize that they need help. People that don't want to ask for help because it's not who they are. They're the helpers, not the helped.

I think many of us fall in that category. We forget to ask for help when we need it. Today is going to be an excellent opportunity for some of us to ask for help during the meeting, Because we have a number of positions still in the congregation on our committees that are not filled. And we have people who need help. We need help on the committees And we need help in the church. The church is here for all of us. Right now we all come every week, we're all part of this great family, and we all go out and we help everyone every day. And there are a number of people that used to come to this church. People that were kids when I was a kid haven't comeback since they got married or haven't come back since their kids hit confirmation. They

don't realize that one day, we might not be here for them. We not might not be here to help them. But we all pray for them. Still, we all pray that every day, they're going to be fine. We pray that every day, they're going to wake up and see God's life. We pray that every day you're showing the hospitality that they were given here. And it's a great thing that we do every day in this church. We provide hospitality, and we help others. As long as we keep praying, God is always aware of what we're doing. Let us pray.