

Sermon Draft

Text: 1 Kings 17:8–16

Sermon: “With God There’s Always Enough”

The long grind of the season after Pentecost is coming to an end. The exuberance and excitement experienced on the Day of Pentecost has given way to the reality of a season of prolonged waiting for the people of God and his Church. With just a few Sundays left in the Church Year, the Epistle begins to draw our attention to the close of the age and the promise of Christ’s second coming: *“so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”* (Hebrews 9:28). This voice and theme will become more pronounced in the closing two weeks as Mark records the words of Jesus and his predictions of the close of the age.

However, the church of today, like the church of yesterday, finds itself waiting, and waiting can be difficult, often leading to weariness. It can often feel as if we are running on empty. The glass that once looked half full now looks a lot more like the glass half empty.

What do you do when you are tired and running low on resources? To that, our collection of readings encourages us to put our trust in the Lord. The Psalm sets the tone from the beginning: ***“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation”*** (Psalm 146:3). Two widows are then set before us, each of them down to the very last of what she has—a little flour and oil (Old Testament Reading, 1 Kings 17:8–16) or a couple of copper coins (Gospel, Mark 12:38–44). These unlikely heroes stand as towering examples of bold trust and faithfulness in God’s Word and promise. This morning I want to focus on the widows.

To start I need your help. I want you to take a moment and think about things that you would never want to be empty. I mean, if you had your way, what would be perpetually full? I think of the movie, “The Bishop’s Wife” the original. I remember how the professor’s bottle of wine is always full after a visit from the angel, who is played by Gary Grant. But I’ll give you a moment to think about what you would put on your list.

Okay, what did you come up with? (Accept responses from the congregation.) That's all good stuff, things like coffee, your gas tank, bank account, energy. Wouldn't it be great if these things never ran out!

But here's my question: Has that ever actually happened to anyone, for real, and not just because you get free refills with your meal? Truth is, it never happens. Our everyday experience tells us time and again that eventually things run out. Eventually it's empty. Eventually what we have is gone. What we live with day in and day out is this cold reality that there never seems to be enough.

This thought leads us into an interesting set of Scripture texts that begins with a widow on the verge of running out. First our Old Testament text from 1st Kings, let me give a little setup as to what's going on. At the end of 1 Kings 16, Ahab becomes king and marries Jezebel. Together they do evil in the eyes of the Lord by leading the people to worship other gods. Elijah pronounces God's judgment on Ahab and on the land by predicting a drought.

The word of the Lord directs Elijah to go into hiding, where God miraculously meets his every need. Now the word of the Lord sends Elijah to a widow in Zarephath, whom God has instructed to feed him, and that brings us to today's text. Obediently, Elijah does as he is instructed. As he arrives at the gate of the city he encounters a widow gathering sticks and ask her to bring him some water to drink. He then also asks for a piece of bread to eat.

This is when we and Elijah learn the gravity of the widow's situation. She has nothing to offer. She is living in a land of scarcity. She is ready to prepare a final meal for herself and her son *“that we may eat it and die”* (v 12). That's a rather dramatic response.

She perhaps meant to match what she perceives as an absurd request. Or it may serve to further highlight the severity of her situation. We can understand her reluctance. We would probably do the same because that is the logical thing to do.

There's another widow before us in our Gospel. Here Jesus and the disciples are at the temple watching people give their offering. We read how many rich people put in large sums of money.

The other poor widow in our lessons appears. She's virtually invisible—nothing more than a speed bump to avoid as the rich go about their daily lives. She pulls out two copper coins and with no fanfare, no pat on the back, drops them into the treasury. We learn that this is all the money she has to live on. The smallest drop in an ocean! Again, our logic kicks in. Why would she do it? What's she thinking? If that's all you have, why give it away? Our conclusion: it's utter foolishness!

Today we are confronted with two different stories, but human logic gets us to the same place. If our last supper is on the way, don't give it away. If we're down to our last penny, don't give it away. That's how we think. We will even justify it in our minds saying, "Certainly God understands the nature of scarcity." Yes, he does. The problem isn't with him; it's with us.

Scarcity prompts preservation and protection. Put money away for a rainy day just in case. We need to cut back on our giving because we don't know what's going to happen during the next election. We can come up with many reasons not to give or help, it's called self-preservation. That's what logic tells us to do.

We're happy to feed the poor when cupboards are full, happy to give . . . donate . . . tithe when the account is overflowing. When it gets down to it, we tend to trust in our abundance. Our logical way of thinking is to trust in abundance. Yet, how often does abundance reveal itself as a hindrance to the movement of God in our lives?

Remember, the story of the rich young man from Mark 10? Jesus tells him he lacked one thing and to go sell all that he had, give it to the poor and come follow Jesus. He goes away sad because his heart and trust were in his abundance.

Logic is a gift from God, but sometimes the way we depend on logic gets in the way of what God is trying to teach us.

The accounts of both widows teach the same lesson: God uses scarcity as a doorway to trust. Trust in the Lord and his provision is the only way either of these stories makes sense. A widow obeys, and they all eat for days. The Bible doesn't say what happens to our other widow, but the point is clear: when we trust in the Lord, there is always enough.

That's easier said than done, of course, but it really should be no surprise, because God has been using scarcity to lead his people to trust for a long time. He provided manna in the desert (Exodus 16). He brought water from a rock (Exodus 17). With just five loaves and two fish, how many thousands of men, women, and children did Jesus feed (Luke 9:10–17)? There was so much abundance they even had leftovers, because with Jesus there is always enough.

Yes! Jesus is always enough! A lesson we struggle to learn, but one that time and again points us to the cross. Jesus came to be enough—enough to pay the full price of our sin.

His mission was not about multiplying food to fill our stomachs but about ransom and restoration to free our souls and fill us to overflowing with grace and forgiveness. The Old Testament sacrifices were never enough to cleanse us from our sin permanently. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ came to be enough: *“He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”* (9:26). Jesus is always enough.

It is into the full sufficiency of Christ that we have been baptized. We have been joined with him in his life, death, and resurrection. We are credited with his righteousness, empowered with his grace, crowned with his glory, and loved with a never-ending love.

So perhaps the next time we find ourselves hurt, wondering if we have enough to forgive, remember that with Christ there is always enough. Or perhaps we're down to the last dollar in our wallet and we happen across that person in need of a helping hand and we're wondering if we can afford to give; remember with Christ there is always enough.

As God's redeemed children, we need not fear scarcity because our Father is a God of rich abundance. When we put our trust in the Lord, when we put our trust in Jesus, we can be sure, no matter the circumstances, there is always enough.

Amen