

THIRTY SECOND SUNDAY [B]

1 Kings 17:10-16; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44

In biblical times, *widows* were among those who were most vulnerable. There was no social service network. There was no welfare system to care for those who had lost their means of economic support

In the ancient biblical world women were not breadwinners in our modern sense of the term. Thus, widows truly were in peril even to survive.

Time and again the prophets speak passionately about widows, consistently sounding a clarion call about God's great love for them *and* our need to care for them. It is the prophetic way of making known God's desire and our duty to champion the least and most threatened among us.

[First Reading: Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17)]

An unrelenting drought had reduced a widow and her son almost to nothing. Today's First Reading describes their plight in no uncertain terms - they are down to no less than their last meal. Stated differently, they are as low as they can go: a widow, struggling mightily to survive during a horrible drought who is down to her last meal with her son. This is someone with no visible means of support, no future, no hope.

At the most bleak moment the prophet Elijah comes to her. Surprised? God often breaks into our lives at precisely the moment when our need for Him is greatest.

Think about it: when the ego is riding high, when life is good and getting better, when there is a confidence in one's own destiny, God often is not sought and not desired.

But when the ego is knocked around, wounded, powerless - that often is when God is seen and experienced. When we feel powerful, it is tempting to keep God at bay as if saying "thanks, but no thanks God...I will call you if I need you - au revoir!"

Conversely in the toughest moments of life, when we hit bottom – and that friends is exactly where the widow of Zarephath is – we are more ready to receive divine grace.

What does the prophet Elijah say to the widow of Zaraphath? "Not to fear my dear lady, the convoy is behind me and air lift underway. Take heart and be strong for help is on the way?" The prophet Elijah says nothing of the sort!

This is what he says: “Please give me a cup of water.” While this leaves us scratching our head on first hearing, God’s truth is this:

Abundance comes from giving.

Elijah addresses a woman in great distress, a woman who really is in a desperate situation. And the prophet asks her to *give*.

And just in case we miss the point, the prophet Elijah intensifies matters! We are told the widow of Zaraphath and her son have exactly enough for one more meal before they die and Elijah asks her to make him a cake!

At the very bottom of her life when she has nothing she is invited to give: give me a drink and then make me a cake.

Here is the great spiritual truth: when you are connected to the God who is nothing but Giving, then you can give and give and give. You will never run out when you are linked to God.

The pathetic opposite situation is every bit as grippingly true. When we cling to the big worldly three – money, sex and power – we hoard and hoard and hoard and never have enough!

Mick Jagger crones “I can’t get no satisfaction.” Do any of us really believe his life has been lacking money, sex and power? And yet, he can’t get no satisfaction!

When we turn something into God that isn’t God and collect ridiculous amounts and it never will be enough – never enough! If it isn’t of God one never will get any sa-tis-fac-tion.

When we are connected to God, when we sincerely seek God, when we desire God, we can give and give and give and it will never run out.

- If you want more meaning in your life, *give* your life away.
- If you want your faith to increase, *share* your faith.
- If you want more joy in your life – and who doesn’t – become a bearer of joy; that is, make other people joyful.
- If you want peace, spread peace; that is, be an instrument of peace.

The widow of Zarephath gives all that she has. She takes the little tiny bit she has and she makes a gift of it to God.

When we are connected to God, *abundance comes from giving.*