

Widow of Faith

By Pastor Nancy Larson
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The widow of Zarephath is a model of steward leadership from whom we can all learn much.

I Kings 17:8-16 tells one of the most powerful personal events recorded in the Old Testament. The widow of Zarephath exposes God's love and grace already at work centuries before the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. We can see God working for good through the prophet Elijah.

It was a time of drought and a woman went to gather sticks intended to be her final act of love for her son. With the sticks, she would bake a small cake from the last handful of meal and drops of oil in order that she and her son might each have something to eat before they died. Then came Elijah, who asked her for some water and a morsel of bread to eat! She confessed her plight to him with apology, but Elijah prevailed upon her to do as she had said. She should however, first prepare a small bit of bread for him and then for her and her son. He conveyed the promise of God that the jar of meal and the jug of oil would not go empty until the drought had ended. This promise meant that she and her son would not starve to death if she first shared with Elijah.

I often think about this woman. Faced with certain starvation of both her and her son, she is asked to share the already inadequate food they have. These days we would certainly look at Elijah with puzzled confusion and respond "Are you crazy? We're about to starve to death and you really expect us to share? Really, you have got to be nuts."

The widow's response was and still is unexpected. The story simply tells us that "She went and did as Elijah said..." What a response of faith and trust! It is an amazing witness of ultimate confidence and reliance in the promises of God! The story goes on, "...so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. 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." Her powerful act of sacrificial service gave evidence of her complete dependence upon God. She was willing to give what was asked and was then

blessed by God for many days.

This widow of Zarephath is a model of steward leadership from whom we can all learn much. In the midst of what we would surely call scarcity, she found abundance. In the face of certain death, she heard the voice of God and was obedient to it. In her fears and sorrow for what was about to unfold for her and her son, she discovered hope in what God would do.

I am awed by this woman's faith and trust, which was put into a very real act of sacrifice that became God's richest blessing for her and her whole household, as well as the stranger Elijah who brought the promises of God. Her story can also be our story as we respond to God's call to generosity for the Malaria Campaign, World Hunger Appeal, Mission Support and in whatever other ways the needs of God's people make themselves known to us. Finally, it is in giving ourselves away that we can discover God's richest blessings in our lives!

To download this article or for more stewardship and mission support resources, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp.



Fall Theological Conference

Oct. 14-16, 2012

Dubuque, Iowa

The Rev. Dr. Stanley N. Olson, president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, will be the keynote presenter at the Northeastern Iowa Synod Fall Theological Conference, Oct. 14-16. The event will focus on the theme "Vocation of Church Leaders" and will take place at the Best Western Midway Motel in Dubuque.

Special room rates are available until Sept. 10 and can be made by calling 800-336-4392. Registration for the conference is due Friday, Sept. 28, by sending a check and registration form to the synod office, www.neiasynod.org/events.