**Elijah Committed ° Courageous ° Common Week 4**

Text: 1 Kings 17:17-24

In our previous studies we’ve seen God faithfully bringing Elijah through impossible situations. We’ve credited these situations to God’s desire to bring Elijah to a place where he is fully trusting in Him for all of his needs. As the training goes on we must remember that God has a purpose in all that Elijah goes through – He is shaping him from being Elijah the Tishbite (17:1) to Elijah the Man of God (17:24) that will stand before the wicked rulers of Israel and the false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in order to point people back to the God of Israel.

While we’ve zoomed in on the themes of prayer, trust and obedience, we come this week to a culmination of the things God has been teaching Elijah during this season of the “hidden life.” Seemingly out of left field, God allows tragedy to strike the house of the widow. *“17 Now it came about after these things (***God’s continual provision***) that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.”* (17:17)

In the midst of God’s miraculous provision the son of the widow dies. It seemingly happens quickly, but is not accidental. The widow is devastated, and rightfully so. So far she’s only known the Lord as the one who keeps her flour and oil supply from running out. Certainly Elijah has been teaching the widow and her son about the Lord during his time with them, but as many of us have come to know, knowing ABOUT God and knowing God are two completely different things. God allows this tragedy to take place to bring this widow to a deeper knowledge and understanding of Himself. People have always been taken by signs and miracles, but Jesus shows us in the NT that there is more to it than that (John 6:23-27; Matt. 12:38-39; 16:1-4).

“In the pictures of the ancient Roman method of threshing grain, one man is always seen stirring up the sheaves while another rides over them in a crude cart equipped with rollers instead of wheels. Sharp stones and rough bits of iron were attached to these cylinders to help separate the husks from the grain. This simple cart was called a tribulum--from which we get our word “tribulation.” When great affliction comes to us, we often think of ourselves as being torn to pieces under the cruel pressures of adverse circumstances. Yet as no thresher ever yoked up his tribulum for the mere purpose of tearing up his sheaves but to disclose the precious grain, or remove the chaff from the grain, so our loving Savior never puts us under the pressure of sorrow and disappointment needlessly.” – Hampton Keathley III

Not only does this occasion allow the widow to experience God in a deeper way, it allows Elijah opportunity to learn yet another lesson in preparation for the tasks ahead. Consider what Elijah has learned so far in his time of spiritual boot camp. At Cherith he came to learn that the Lord was **enough** to meet his needs. As things fell to pieces around him, he was safely tucked away and provided for. Next, he learned that God was **more than enough** as He provided not only for Elijah’s need in Zarephath, but also for the widow and her son with the unending supply of flour and oil. These were certainly miraculous events but God wants to give Elijah an even deeper understanding as he shows him that He is **more than enough THROUGH him**.

What does that mean? It means that the level of faith and trust that had been established between God and Elijah paved the way for Elijah to do something that had never been done before. We must remind ourselves at this point the truth of James 5. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, the key to what was about to happen was prayer – more specifically, the effective prayer of a righteous man.

If you are familiar with the scriptures then you know there are a handful of accounts of people being raised from the dead – however, at this point in history, it had never been done. That means that Elijah has to take quite a step of faith to even consider such a thing be done. Also, talk about pressure – the widow is blaming him for her son’s death! But here’s the pecking order: the widow appeals to Elijah and then Elijah immediately appeals to God. And it isn’t an eloquent appeal. He sounds quite upset, actually. But his trust in God doesn’t waiver and when he makes a request of God, it’s bold and it’s to the point. The text tells us that the LORD heard Elijah and that life returned to the young boy.

**Where else in the scriptures do we see life restored to those who have passed?**

God **prepared** Elijah for that moment. In the monotony of Cherith and in his little upper room in Zarephath, God prepared him. He didn’t prepare him to encourage the widow in her time of distress, he didn’t prepare him to make promises that would comfort her, he prepared him to run to the throne of grace and mercy and pour out his soul to the One who is able. Brothers and sisters, we must not overlook the importance of our day to day dealings with our Lord. His preparation for the next season of his ministry didn’t come about in the form of lots of spiritual butt-kicking; it came about in 3 and a half years of relying on God to meet his every need in every situation. Sitting, waiting, listening – the things we often view as a waste of time, or mundane were instrumental in this part of Elijah’s life.

Remember, we don’t see in the text that Elijah comes to God and says “Lord, I think I need a wilderness experience, or perhaps a Zarephath experience or even a raising someone from the dead experience,” yet God orchestrates those things in his life and sees him through them in order to **prepare** him for future ministry. In fact, this is the last thing we see Elijah do before he’s given the command to “*go, show yourself.*” We see then that God has worked several things in Elijah’s heart and shown him that even the “impossible” becomes possible when God is in it.

**Have you experienced God doing the “impossible” in your life? Have you, like the widow, felt blindsided by circumstances in your life? Have you given consideration to the fact that God is preparing you for something else?**

Friends, God is in the business of bringing people from death to life. The work was accomplished by Jesus on the cross and he uses human instruments (believers) to share it. We ourselves have been rescued from the clutches of death and brought into newness of life through Christ Jesus.

**Memory Verse**: The Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. 1 Kings 17:22 (NASB)