

# PENTECOST 25

## *Proper 27 - Year B*

*This Bible study was written by the Rev. Erin Jean Warde for Proper 27 (B) in 2012.*

*Note: During the 2024 Season after Pentecost, Sermons That Work will use Track 2 readings for sermons and Bible studies. Please consult our archives for many additional Track 1 resources from prior years.*

### **1 Kings 17:8-16**

<sup>8</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, <sup>9</sup>“Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there, for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” <sup>10</sup>So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” <sup>11</sup>As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” <sup>12</sup>But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” <sup>13</sup>Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said, but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup>For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.” <sup>15</sup>She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup>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.

### **Commentary from Erin Jean Warde**

In this text, Elijah has been sent to Zarephath, and in this place he encounters a widow. He finds her at the gate, making her both literally and figuratively in the margins of society. In 1 Kings a continual theme is that God overcomes drought and famine to assert power over the natural world, in such a way that questions the sensibilities of the people. This is no different. Elijah speaks to the widow and asks her to feed him, and she explains that she has such little food that after eating it with her son, they would still die. Elijah empowers her and sends her to feed the three of them, with the promise that she can, through the power of God, offer this meal. Not only does he ensure that they will be fed once, but he also ensures that the jar of meal will not empty until God's power is shown to the earth in the form of the end of the drought. Elijah brings to the widow a prophecy of abundance in a scarce land. Where the world may offer death, Elijah promises that God offers the provisions that ensure life.

### **Discussion Questions from STW**

Where have you come to see abundance where it might not be immediately apparent?

Have you ever experienced this kind of divine intervention?

## Psalm 146

- <sup>1</sup> Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul! \*  
I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will  
sing praises to my God while I have my being.
- <sup>2</sup> Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of  
earth,\*  
for there is no help in them.
- <sup>3</sup> When they breathe their last, they return to earth, \*  
and in that day their thoughts perish.
- <sup>4</sup> Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their  
help! \*  
whose hope is in the Lord their God;
- <sup>5</sup> Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is  
in them; \*  
who keeps his promise for ever;
- <sup>6</sup> Who gives justice to those who are oppressed, \*  
and food to those who hunger.
- <sup>7</sup> The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the  
eyes of the blind; \*  
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
- <sup>8</sup> The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord cares for the  
stranger; \*  
he sustains the orphan and widow, but  
frustrates the way of the wicked.
- <sup>9</sup> The Lord shall reign for ever, \*  
your God, O Zion, throughout all  
generations. Hallelujah!

### Commentary from Erin Jean Warde

This psalm sings praises to Yahweh, while also in the third verse juxtaposing the power of God to the power of earthly rulers. The psalm proclaims, "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help." The psalm continues by taking readers back to the first showing of God's power, creation, in verse five. The exclamation of the power of God shown in creation gives way to praise of God's power on earth, a power shown through the means of justice for the oppressed and food for the hungry. To show the far-reaching extent of God's power over the world God has created, God is defined as a God who sets prisoners free, heals people of their earthly infirmities, welcomes the stranger, shows compassion toward the orphan and the widow and defends the faithful people of God.

### Discussion Questions from STW

Have you ever experienced God working through you or your community? If so, when?

What does it mean that the ruler of the universe, who set the stars in the sky, wants also to be known as a helper to those society often forgets?

## Hebrews 9:24-28

<sup>24</sup> For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the holy place year after year with blood that is not his own, <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgment, <sup>28</sup> 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.

### **Commentary from Erin Jean Warde**

In this reading from Hebrews, the reader is reminded of the power of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, which has offered grace to creation: past, present and future. Christ “did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands,” because the power of God is not from this world. Christ was present before God in God’s kingdom, and from that place intercedes for us, by offering us the power and presence of God-in-Christ. The work of God through Christ has transcended time and ended death. Death was ended not only for Christ, who was resurrected, but for the whole of humanity, because God has promised a savior who is sent “to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

### **Discussion Questions from STW**

Have you considered that, even though all buildings pale in comparison to the presence of God, that your congregation’s sanctuary could be patterned on paradise? What does that tell us about heaven? What does that tell us about our meeting places?

## Mark 12:38-44

<sup>38</sup>As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces <sup>39</sup>and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! <sup>40</sup>They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

<sup>41</sup>He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup>Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup>For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

### Commentary from Erin Jean Warde

In this text, the writer of Mark juxtaposes a story about the hypocrisy and false witness of the scribes with a story of a widow who gives her most honest offering. In verses 38-41, Jesus teaches against those who serve God, yet reap earthly rewards for doing so. This seems to go along with Jesus’ teaching that the first in the kingdom of God shall be last, and the last shall be first. The “places of honor at the banquets” are not for the people of God; the people of God are last on earth, and ushered first into the kingdom of Heaven. Earthly authority has no bearing on whether or not a person will receive the glory of God on the last day. Continuing in verse 41, the gospel writer tells the story of a poor widow giving a penny, which is “everything she had, all she had to live on.” Again, like in the reading from 1 Kings, the power of God takes a place of scarcity and transforms it into an offering of abundance. The widow is faithful, and she doesn’t give out of scarcity, she gives out of the abundance that she believes will come to pass through the faithfulness and power of God.

### Discussion Questions

We frequently hear the suggestion that Christians give of their time, talent, and treasure to serve God and neighbor. The widow teaches us well to give treasure when we have only a little; does the same teaching hold up in terms of time and talent, both of which might be limited in our lives?