

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁷ Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹ “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.” ¹⁰ So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” ¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

¹² “As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

¹³ Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.’”

¹⁵ She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. This is God’s Word.

Dear Friends,

I was hoping that 2019 would be a better year but there have been quite a few shootings throughout our country and then we had the government shut down with the possibility of another shutdown in 3 weeks and last week the State of New York passed that horrendous law to legalize abortion all the way to the end of the pregnancy. It seems that our world is in crisis, and some of you may be experiencing your own personal crisis as well. As we consider what is going on in our lives and in the world around us, this portion of scripture reminds us that, **“The Lord Cares for His Own.” “He Brings Help in Time of Crisis,”** and **“He Remains Faithful to His promise.”**

I. Elijah prophesied during a time when King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were ruling the northern tribes of Israel. Ahab has been characterized as one of the most evil kings to rule. He brought Baal worship to Israel when he married Jezebel. He built altars to Baal, appointed 450 prophets to serve this false god, and encouraged the people to embrace the detestable practices of Baal worship. Idol worship was one way in which to bring God’s anger and swift judgment.

God sent Elijah to announce his judgment on King Ahab and the Children of Israel for worshipping this false god. Elijah’s message from God was clear – **“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”** (Isaiah 17:1). The irony of this judgment is that Baal, the false god they worshipped, was suppose to provide rain for the land and now God is going to show the people just how powerless their false god truly is, with the hope that they will turn back to the one true God for deliverance from their crisis. The King wasn’t happy with God’s judgment and vowed to kill

Elijah so Elijah had to go into hiding. He fled to the Kerith Ravine where the Lord protected and provided for him.

The ravine had a brook that provided water but not food of any sorts. God sent ravens to Elijah with bread and meat for him to eat. Ravens are natural scavengers and they do not share what they find and yet they are part of God's creation. God directed these creatures to do something they normally would not do, to take care of his messenger during this time of crisis. While the drought settled in and created chaos in the country, Elijah was safe and probably standing in awe at the miraculous way in which God protected him and provided for him at this time. We don't know how long Elijah was in the Kerith Ravine but eventually, due to the drought, the brook dried up and so God directed Elijah to head for Zarephath.

Elijah would be safe in Zarephath because it was a small town north of Israel – outside the country and away from King Ahab who wanted to kill him. God told Elijah he would find a widow in Zarephath who would supply him with food. And that is exactly what happened. God provided for this widow, her son, and Elijah during this time of crisis. The Lord takes care of his own.

As we listen to this account from Elijah's life the LORD is calling on us to trust Him to provide for our needs. That doesn't mean we don't have to work but consider the words God spoke to Noah hundreds of years before Elijah, **“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”** (Genesis 8:22) It isn't by chance that the world still turns in a predictable pattern. An annual time for planting and harvesting occurs because the LORD rules His creation. Psalm 145:15-16 states this truth so well, **“¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. ¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”** Our eyes look with trust to the LORD and He provides for our needs in spite of what is going on in the world around us.

Since most of us get our food from a grocery store we may lose sight of the fact that God uses natural means to provide for us. We eat potatoes from Idaho, beef from Nebraska, and oranges from Florida and California. We might think the bounty of our land comes from our technology or our talented farmers, but it really comes from the LORD of heaven and earth.

As we apply the story of Elijah to our lives let's first and foremost remember to trust the LORD to provide what we need. He sent his Son to redeem us and to bring us into his family through faith and if he takes care of our spiritual needs in such a miraculous way he most certainly will take care of our physical needs. Usually he uses natural means to do this but at times he still uses miracles. As we consider how God provides for all of our needs, spiritual and physical, may we also realize he does this because, **“God remains faithful to his promises.”**

II. From the moment Elijah announced God's Word to Ahab he had to trust that same word for survival. This was certainly a test of Elijah's faith. He didn't know what he would find in the Kerith Ravine but I'm guessing when he got there it was pretty desolate except for the brook. When the raven dropped the meat and the bread in front of him, how long do you think Elijah looked at it before he figured out this was how God was going to provide for him? And then the brook dried up. Why couldn't God keep it flowing? Instead Elijah had to travel to Zarephath.

God told him to go to a widow, but I'm not sure if Elijah knew how to identify her. He found a widow but then she gave Elijah a heart wrenching story, **"I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."** Is this the correct widow? Would her story make you question what you are doing? Should you ask God if he really is serious about this? Elijah didn't. He trusted God and maybe realized that God was not only testing his faith but the woman's faith also.

"Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.'" This man of God is telling her to give him all that she has for food and not to worry because God will provide for her until the rain comes. Should she believe him? Could it be that her oil and flour will never run out? The great faith chapter of the Bible tells us, **"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."** (Hebrews 11:1). This woman is an example of what faith is all about because, **"¹⁵ She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah."**

Elijah and the widow had passed the test. They were not disappointed. They listened to God and trusted his Word and God kept his promises and took care of them. In a way they had never thought of, but according to God's good and gracious will.

We need God's Word. By ourselves we can do nothing except worry and dig ourselves into a deep hole of despair. Wondering how we will ever survive. Times might be tough for us but our God continues to come to us through his Word and assure us through his promises that we don't have to worry – the LORD provides for our needs. Jesus said, **"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** (Matthew 6:31-33).

Seek God's kingdom first – take care of your spiritual life and everything else will fall into place. Our soul needs food just as much as our body and so we want to stay on a steady diet of God's Word to remain spiritually healthy and as we do that, it will give us the faith of Elijah to trust God to provide for every aspect of our lives. God keeps his promises.

It wasn't always easy for Elijah to trust God and it isn't always easy for us either. Thankfully we have a Savior who trusted his heavenly Father at all times. Remember when Satan tempted Jesus to serve himself by changing some stones into bread? Jesus resisted that temptation and waited for his Father to send an angel to strengthen him and provide for his needs. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he expressed the sincere faith and trust that we so often lack. He said simply, **"Give us this day our daily bread."** And Jesus lived every moment with trust that His Father would give him his daily bread. Now through the perfect life of Jesus and through his

death in our place God our Father looks at us as though we always trust him and always look to him for what we need.

God truly remains faithful to his promises we rejoice that he is faithful to us. He not only brings help during times of crisis, but he provides for us at all times because the Lord Cares for his own. Amen.