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Gracious God, May these words be your words of grace. Amen

In the book of Hebrews we hear these words, “Faith is the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see.” Fredrick Beechner says that faith is a journey and a homesickness for the Kingdom of God, which we have not yet experienced. It is a thirst for that which we have not yet tasted.

Imagine the woman gathering sticks at the gate of her town. She has lived in this town all of her life and yet after her husband died, she experienced isolation. It was just she and her son. She had no worth or status in ancient culture, with no father or husband. Yet THESE people knew her. But the drought had made life hard...and it had made them hard. There was no generosity to be found. Her last meal – that is all she had left. After this meal there was no more oil or flour left. NOTHING. When she was at her lowest, here comes a man, not of her tribe – a man from the Hebrew tribe asking for water. Didn’t he have eyes? Didn’t he see how desperate she was ? YET he looked in pretty bad shape too. He had been living off of what the ravens had gathered for him. She drew water for him. But then he asked for food. That was crossing the line. This was HER flour...this was HER oil. And yet this stranger promised her a miracle. He told her not to be afraid. God would provide her with enough oil and flour until the end of the drought. Well her heart felt a hope...a new trust that she had not felt in a long time. She took the risk...she became a part of Elijah’s promise. Can one person’s strong faith inspire another to live in faith? I think so.

I struggle with many things in this scripture.

1. God had told Elijah that God had commanded a widow in Sidon to feed him. And yet as he approached this widow, she seemed clueless. Did Elijah just choose the first widow he found and was wrong? Or was the widow so panicked and in survival mode that she could not hear God’s call?
2. Why would God call a widow to feed Elijah? Why did God call someone with so little resources to feed him? Why not the mayor of the city? Yet, God chooses a widow at the end of her rope. She had tied a knot and hung on for dear life. She needed Elijah as much as he needed her.

In the midst of these questions we find gems, guides of faith.

- A. Elijah tells the widow not to be afraid. All throughout the scriptures, God tells folk not to be afraid. That is because God knows how truly afraid we are. We are fragile, vulnerable, aching for certainty. Our solid footing depends on our connection with God.
- B. Pay Attention to God First – Elijah tells her to bake him something first.
- C. Live Life in Trust – Day by Day: Yet this story is not about a sure fire formula for a miracle. Miracles are not guaranteed. But miracles are gifts, mysteries, unexpected visits by the holy.

BUT this story is REALLY about community. If we learn to depend on each other and depend on God, we learn to let go. We learn to give of ourselves generously, no matter how scary life is. We are open to giving and being vulnerable enough to receive. As agitated as I get at Elijah's assumptions and demands of a woman just trying to survive, I discover something beautiful. For in her giving, a whole new world unfolds before her – and she receives much, much more.