

Hope Church South Haven July 12th 2026

Standing Alone #2

1 Kings 17:8-24

Last week we started the new series: STANDING ALONE – The life of Elijah:

- **God's grace is incredibly patient**, but He will not compete for his throne.
- God often **provides differently** than we expect.

I need to own something today:

- There have been seasons when our finances felt painfully tight.
- One of the first things I **sacrificed was my generosity**. Supporting others. Even my giving to the church.
- It FELT *wise*. It FELT *responsible*. I assumed God will understand – God is not a big fan of debt.

But looking back, I see that my biggest problem wasn't a lack of money. It was a lack of trust.

I was trying to **build my own security** instead of trusting God. And that's often *what fear does*. It CONVINCES us that if we loosen our grip, we **won't have enough** to SURVIVE.

That's exactly what today's Elijah story is about. It's story about trust. And it's HAPPENING in the middle of a drought. It's HAPPENING through a **widow who has almost nothing left**. But before we meet her, we need to meet someone else.

Her name is JEZEBEL – AHAB's *wife*. The queen of Israel. She was a **Phoenician princess from Sidon**. She worshiped Baal and actively worked against the worship of Yahweh.

Why do we need to know who she is? Because when the river dries up, God doesn't send Elijah to some exotic destination that isn't struggling under the drought. He sends him to Sidon. **Jezebel's homeland**. *The heart of Baal worship*. The place where everyone believed Baal ruled.

Challenge accepted – God isn't intimidated by **false gods** or **hostile cultures** or **impossible situations**.

Let's read together from 1st Kings 17.

Verses 8-9:

Then the word of the Lord came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

- ZAREPHATH was a prosperous Phoenician coastal town in *Sidon*. **Enemy territory.**
- In the ANCIENT NEAR EAST, widows were among the most vulnerable people in society. Without a husband, they had **little legal protection. Limited access** to *land and money*. Depended on the generosity of others to survive.
- In the original Hebrew, God’s command to Elijah comes in **three parts** – *qoma / halek / yiteb*: **Get up. Go. Stay.**
- God *isn’t simply relocating* Elijah to a random place. He is sending him to a place where God wants him to settle down. **To trust Him there.**

Verses 10-12:

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?” As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” “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 olive 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.”

- When Elijah arrived at ZAREPHATH, he found a *widow* at the city gate gathering sticks.
- The city gate was the **center of life in the ancient world**.
 - ⇒ *Business* happened there.
 - ⇒ *Justice* was administered there.
 - ⇒ *People* gathered there.
- Yet she wasn't there to hang out and participate. She was there collecting firewood. A quiet reminder of **how vulnerable she had become**.
- Elijah's first request *seems almost impossible*: **Would you bring me a little water?**
- By now the DROUGHT had dragged on for months **and water was probably scarce**.
- Elijah wasn't trying to take advantage of her. He was trying to see if she would choose kindness even in scarcity.
- **Offering water to a thirsty traveler** was one of the most basic acts of hospitality.
- As she turned to get the water, Elijah made one more request: **Please bring me a piece of bread**.
- The *widow's* response is heartbreaking: **As surely as the LORD your God lives. Not my God, but **your God****. She knows about Yahweh, but she doesn't know Him as her God.

- Then she tells Elijah what she has left: a handful of flour and a little oil.
- Those aren't *simply meager supplies*. **They're the very last traces of hope for her.**
- She's not exaggerating or looking for sympathy. **She's just telling the truth.** As it is.
- In her mind, this is their final meal. She isn't expecting a miracle. All she wants to do as a mom is to **give her son one last meal** before they DIE.

Verses 13-16:

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 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 sends rain on the land.'" "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. 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.

- And Elijah asks for a part of their last meal. His RESPONSE almost catches us off guard.
- It's almost as if *he is oblivious* to their DESPERATE CIRCUMSTANCES.
- **Don't be afraid...but first make a small loaf of bread for me.** Not what we expect a prophet will say to a starving widow.

- We find these words: **Don't be afraid** throughout the Bible. Whenever God calls people to trust Him with *what seems impossible*, **those words are never far away.**
- The widow MUST LET GO of the very thing she believes is keeping her alive *before* she **sees any evidence that God will provide.**
- Faith has always worked that way. It trusts God's character **before it sees God's provision.**
- Then the story reaches its turning point: **She went away and did as Elijah had told her.**
- No **debate**. No **guarantees**.
- And that's where everything changed.
- God didn't fill her pantry overnight or **make her wealthy**. *This wasn't luck or coincidence.* God simply did WHAT HE PROMISED.
- The miracle wasn't just about flour and oil. It was a DECLARATION that she can **trust the God of Israel.**

Verses 17-21:

Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him

on his bed. Then he cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”

- The miracle does not stop. She doesn’t run out of flour and oil. But the miracle does not spare the *widow* **from suffering**.
- The writer says the *widow*’s son **stopped breathing**. He uses the HEBREW word *neshamah*. It’s the same word used in **Genesis 2:7** when God breathed life into Adam.
- Her response is raw. She cries out to Elijah: **What do you have against me, man of God?**
- This isn’t a title of honor. **It’s an accusation**.
- In her mind, Elijah’s presence has exposed her sin. Her son’s DEATH is **God’s punishment**. That’s how people in the *ancient world understood suffering*. If TRAGEDY struck, **someone must have deserved it**.
- Real human moment.
 - ⇒ GRIEF doesn’t always think clearly.
 - ⇒ **It searches for someone to blame**.
- Elijah doesn’t argue with her or **offer easy answers**.

- He simply says: **Give me your son.**
- By carrying the dead boy upstairs, he would have become ceremonially unclean.
- But **compassion mattered more** for Elijah than *doing the right religious thing.*
- His actions reminds us that **love moves toward suffering instead of away from it.**
- He carries the child to his room, lays him on his bed, and begins to pray.
- His PRAYER is **remarkably honest.** He doesn't pretend to understand what God is doing.
- Then Elijah stretches himself over the child three times. *It's a strange scene.* Elijah stands in place where death seems to have won and **cries out for God to do what only God can do.** *Give life.*
- Three times he prays the same simple request. Desperation. Elijah knows that only God can give *neshamah* to the lifeless.
- Elijah knows that only God can bring someone back from the dead.

Verses 22-24:

The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

- The Lord **HEARS** Elijah's prayer. In the Bible **HEARING** means more than just listening.

When God hears, He acts.

- This is the first time in the Bible someone is **raised from the dead**.
- Then the widow says something remarkable. Earlier she said: **the LORD your God**.
Keeping her distance from the God Elijah served.
- Now everything has changed. She says: **Now I know**. She knows *two things*.
⇒ Elijah is a man of God.
⇒ **God can be trusted**.
- She has moved from simply trying to survive to **trusting the God of Elijah**.

Perspective from the widow:

**GOD OFTEN ASKS US TO RELEASE WHAT WE THINK IS KEEPING US
ALIVE.**

FAITH isn't pretending to have abundance. To have everything together. FAITH is
trusting God with what little you have. 1st Kings 17 REMINDS us that God *doesn't*

always ask His people to give out of abundance. Sometimes He asks us to *trust Him* with what **feels like our last handful**.

But God wasn't really after her flour. He owns every field and every harvest. He could **have fed Elijah another way**. The flour wasn't the issue. Trust was.

God was asking her to loosen her grip on the **very thing she believed was keeping her alive**. She had to let go of what *she believed would save her* BEFORE **she could trust the One who really could**.

God says, 'I must be more important to you than anything else.'

Tim Keller

We see this through the entire Bible.

- Abraham placed Isaac on the altar.
- Israel gathered manna one day at a time.
- The rich young ruler was asked to surrender his wealth.
- The widow of Zarephath had to give up last meal.

Different stories. The **same invitation**. God wants us to trust His promises more than our own security. Our own plans. Our own abilities.

Last week I quoted Corrie Ten Boom: **Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.** But she also said:

When I try, I fail. When I trust, He succeeds.

Notice how God provides.

- He doesn't fill her pantry for the next five years.
- He doesn't remove every uncertainty.
- He simply gives enough for this day. And then the next. And then the next.

It's the same pattern we see in the wilderness. Every morning there was fresh manna.

Enough for that day. **Every new day they had trust God again.**

It's also *how Jesus taught us to pray*:

Give us today our daily bread.

We live in a world where we want *enough for the next ten years*. We want to know that **everything is going to be all right**. That we will have more than enough.

God usually gives enough grace for today. DAILY **bread**. DAILY **mercy**. DAILY **strength**.

DAILY **dependence**. For a country build on independence, we need to learn that

dependence doesn't mean weakness. It's where **our faith grows**.

Can I ask you a personal question? What are you holding onto because you believe your security depends on it? What feels too risky to let go of?

- Maybe it's being in control.
- Maybe it's **your retirement account**.
- Maybe it's a *relationship you're desperately trying to hold together*.
- Maybe it's your reputation.
- Maybe it's the **illusion that you can keep everything together**.

That's our modern handfuls of flour.

God asks us to loosen our grip. Not because He wants to leave us empty. But because **He wants us to discover that He is enough**.

This is not PROSPERITY THEOLOGY. God **doesn't promise** that every sacrifice leads to wealth. He didn't give the widow **overflowing barns** or **full storehouses**. Just enough.

God wants us to trust Him with our needs and wants and future and relationships.

The jar never overflowed. But it never was empty either.

Scarcity doesn't mean that God has forgotten you. **Sometimes it's the place where we discover that Christ is enough.**

The will of God is never exactly what you expect it to be. It may seem much worse, but in the end it's going to be a lot better and a lot bigger.

Elisabeth Elliot

Perspective from Elijah:

GOD DOESN'T JUST PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE. HE OFTEN PROVIDES THROUGH HIS PEOPLE.

Last week God provided for Elijah. This week **God provides through Elijah**.

- Last week ravens carried bread.
- This week Elijah brings the hope.

Think about how much Elijah has changed.

- Last week he stood before a king announcing judgment. This week he **kneels beside a grieving mother.**
- Last week he spoke with boldness. This week he **quietly enters someone's pain.**
- Last week he confronted idolatry. This week he **comforts heartbreak.**

God isn't only changing Elijah's circumstances. **He's changing Elijah.** That's how God works. Before He DOES *something significant through us*, He usually DOES something within us. **He forms our character before He expands our influence.**

Sometimes the greatest miracle God is doing isn't around us. **It's in us.** As He teaches us to become people who carry His *compassion* and His *hope* and His *presence* into **someone else's pain**. 1st Kings 17 reminds us that God doesn't simply bless His people. God blesses us that we can bless others.

Elijah never tries to *explain the widow's suffering*. He never says: **Everything happens for a reason.** He doesn't offer easy answers.

- He simply picks up the boy.
- Carries him upstairs.
- And prays.

Sometimes the MOST SPIRITUAL THING we can do is to **stop explaining suffering** and just start entering it.

Up until this moment **death had always won**. No one had ever come back from it. But for the first time death loses. It's a preview of what Jesus came to do.

- Elijah prayed. **Jesus took a beating and the abuse and the cross...**
- Elijah stretched himself over the child. **Jesus entered death...**
- Elijah returned one son to his mother. **Jesus conquered death for anyone who believes in Him.**

I wonder who God has placed in your life?

- Someone carrying grief.
- Someone **quietly overwhelmed**.
- Someone *wondering whether God has forgotten them*.

They may never need a perfect answer. But they may DESPERATELY **need someone who simply shows up**. With a meal or a phone call or a prayer or a visit or your presence.

God uses ordinary people in ordinary places to do ordinary things through which He accomplishes extraordinary purposes.

Sometimes God's provision has your name on it. Sometimes God's provision has your name on it.

- Maybe this week *God wants to answer* someone *else's* prayer through your generosity.
- Maybe **He wants to comfort** someone through your presence.
- Maybe *He wants to remind someone they haven't been forgotten* because **you** **decided to show up.**

One of the MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS I've learnt since moving to America has been not to hold too tightly to what makes me feel secure.

When we first arrived, Lynette couldn't work. We were living on one income. There were plenty of moments when it would have made complete sense to stop supporting the Hlokwa & Mathiva families in South Africa. Every spreadsheet told me there just wasn't enough money to cover everything.

But I didn't want to go back to my default setting to just cut off our support. Wanted to do things differently. We sensed God saying: Keep trusting. And we did.

And today, Peter's wife Portia finished her studies. Their daughter Sabra graduated from
school. Arthur bought his first car.

God was caring for all three families at the same time.

The God who provides still provides through His people.