1 Kings 17:17-24 (24) 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.”

I don’t know if it is possible to speak of this history of Elijah and not talk about all that is and has been going on during the time of Elijah. And even if we just stuck to this particular text, there is so much going on and so much to learn that it is absolutely astounding. So if you don’t mind, we are going to just jump into our text and learn as much as we can. Our theme will be: LESSONS ABOUT GOD. 1st. God’s power. 2nd. God’s Grace. 3rd. God is truth.

As I just said, there is so much that can be learned in this section of God’s Word and of course, in the context that surrounds this text, so important for understanding the text. We are aware of the fact that Elijah is a prophet of God. Actually, chapter 17 is our introduction to this awesome prophet of God. His first task is simply to announce to the people of Israel the judgment of God against them. This judgment came about because of the apostasy of these people. For many years now the Israelites have turned away from the Lord and his Word. They worship and follow false God’s, claiming they follow the true God, claiming they love the Lord and his Ways, but there was not a shred of truth to those claims. And so the Lord, in an effort to bring his people to repent, produces another prophet to guide them. The prophet Elijah.

Elijah’s first tasks is to announce a drought that will last a few years. God tells Elijah to announce this and then go off and hide in the Kerith Ravine where the ravens will feed him and a spring will provide water for him. We don’t know exactly how long he stayed there but it was just as the Lord had said. There was no rain in the land. The ravens did indeed feed him with bread and meat every morning and every evening. And the brook watered him, until finally it dried up.

It is at this point that the Lord tells Elijah to go to the land of Sidon, the city of Zarephath and a widow who lived there. Please note that God does not have Elijah go to a Jewish household but rather to this gentile household in Gentile territory. When Elijah arrives at the home of this widow, she is about to make her last cake of bread with the last she had of flour and oil. Elijah asks for some bread for himself and when she confesses that what she has is her last and then her and her son will die, Elijah gives a promise from the Lord. The promise is that that jar of flour and the jug of oil will not run out until the day the Lord brings rain on the land. She believes Elijah. And so it is in this household. Elijah, the widow and her son all living contentedly and happily, for the jar and the jug never run out.

And then come the opening words of our text. **“Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing.”** I am not sure of everything going on here but one thing becomes clear. **“Some time later”** our text says. How much we don’t know, but one gets the impression it may have been a year or two. The drought is going to last three and a half years and it is in the next chapter that the drought ends. So we surmise that after considerable time this woman’s son becomes ill. He gets worse and worse. He dies. Now just hang on to that thought and we will come back to it because I want to be sure and get this entire episode in and then bring home the lessons.

The woman brings her dead son to Elijah. Strong words, grieving words are spoken. She says, **“What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”** At this point Elijah asks for the boy’s body. By the way, Elijah says to the Lord, **“O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?”** Those word seem to indicate Elijah’s shock at the death of this boy. Elijah doesn’t completely understand what the Lord is up to, but it is also clear that Elijah trusts the Lord to do what is right and so Elijah then prays for the boy’s life: **“O Lord, my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”** By the time it is all said and done, the boy is brought back to life. The words that we highlighted are the response of the woman to this awesome miracle of God. She says, **“Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”**

Isn’t that an awesome history? And do you see the lessons I see? Do you see the power of God throughout? That God causes a drought. That God causes ravens to feed his prophet morning and evening. That God causes a jar of flour and a jug of oil to never be empty. That God can and did raise this boy from the dead. The power of God. Notice how this power is used for good and righteous things. Because truth be told, God could have simply wiped away the people who had rejected him, wiped Israel right off the map for their godlessness. God could have brought untold suffering and disease to this land and its people or many other untold horrors and terrors. But what you see is God using his power for good. God wants his people to feel his power and yet God wants people to grasp that he does and will use this wonderful power of his for our good. God wants his people to repent and turn to him not to destroy them. I don’t think you can hear this history and not marvel at the power of God. I would challenge you to go back and read and reread that history and just marvel at the power of God, perhaps a few points of power that I didn’t even see.

Do you see God’s grace in this history? I see it all over the place. A drought instead of brimstone and hellfire upon these people? Ever since Jeroboam’s time, some 63 years, the people of Israel have turned away from the Lord God. They have built false temples, actually two temples with golden calves as their worship places, not to mention the numerous heathen places of worship they had. Right now their king and queen, Ahab and Jezebel, are considered the most evil rulers to have been. God is being patient, but considering what these people knew of the history of God and his power even 63 years of apostasy is total wickedness. Yet God is gracious and only sends a drought. God’s grace.

Or how about how God feeds Elijah. The ravens’ thing! That is just incredible. God kept his prophet alive and well because of his grace. And the jug / jar thing. Wow! God’s grace again. Three people kept alive and well because God cared for them and loved them.

Then comes the greatest act of God’s grace. I’ll bet you missed it. The boy dies. What! You think that was an act of God’s grace? You think that was good? That God should feed them miraculously for maybe a year and then this boy up and dies! Are you crazy? I don’t think so.

I find it strange that this woman has this son who is ill, but evidently she does not bring the ill boy to Elijah. She does not seek the prophet’s help while the boy is ill for I would expect that the boy would have been healed had she done that. If the woman at this point were a believer that’s what one would expect but it doesn’t happen. And when the dead boy is brought to Elijah, he seems confused and dazed by it all!

I’ll tell you what I think. I think this woman and her son were being miraculously fed by the Lord but even with that miracle going on every day, these two did not come to faith, did not at this point grasp the wonder and marvel of the Lord God. So the Lord in his grace, get that, the Lord in His grace takes steps, the best steps in order to wake these two up to the joys of eternal life and salvation. It took a death. It took a resurrection to bring them around. That’s why I highlighted the words of the widow I did. I believe those words her confession of faith, her new found faith in the Lord God and his awesome power not only to raise the dead but to give eternal life and salvation to the world too. In this act, in this moment of grace this woman and her son become eternal children of God and heirs of life forever. Yes, it was God’s grace!

Do you see in that wonderful act the facts of Jesus foreshadowed? Jesus the son would also die and that too was a pure act of grace. Jesus died so that we might live. Jesus was brought back to life just so we could grasp the full and wonderful power of God brought to bear in our lives. Since Jesus the son was brought back to life, so faith and salvation is preached in His name to all the world. In the risen, resurrected son of God we have the gift of life, the gift of God’s pure grace revealed to us. And like that widow, it is this act of death and resurrection that bring us to the Lord. Yep, the gospel foreshadowed. Jesus, his death and resurrection foreshadowed to bring us to saving faith in the Lord.

At this point I would like to mention Luke 4. In Luke 4 Jesus in speaking about the fact that a prophet is not accepted in his own home town and in that connection he says this, **“I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut up for three and a half years and there was famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.”** Many people conclude on the basis of this verse that Jesus was sent to this widow because she was a woman of faith. Strange faith she had to not take her ill boy to Elijah. I think Elijah was sent there that she become a woman of faith because it was clear that the Jewish people were not and would not listen to God. That’s the importance of what our verse says.

**“Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”** Do you hear her confession of faith? Now, because of this resurrection I know and see the truth of God. Before that, I knew you had announced the drought, knew you had promised a jug and jar that wouldn’t run out, I knew you said you were of and from God but I didn’t really believe. If I had believed then why didn’t I bring my ill son to you? In desperation and grief, when my son died, I confronted and accused you and your God and then you showed me the full extent of God’s love. My son came back to life. Your God brought my son to life!

Dear people, God’s Word is true, it is truth in every way that the word truth is meant. It reveals the wonders of God and everything we need to know about his grace and power. It is consistent throughout. If this woman knew God’s truth because of her son’s resurrection then shouldn’t we also know God’s truth because of His Son’s resurrection? And don’t you see the very lesson of this text uttered in the Gospel reading where Jesus brings to life the widow of Nain’s son? The power of God in the resurrection! Same lesson. God uses his power for our good. God shows us his goodness even in death (think of both widows!). God especially shows us his goodness, his complete grace in the resurrection from the dead.

Because Jesus lives so shall we. He is the living God. He is the very truth of God. He is the very heart and core of God’s Word. In other words, as we study the Word we become more and more convinced it is God’s Word. It is trustworthy and true. It is given for our good and salvation. It is given that we might know that in the son’s death and resurrection there is life and salvation. May you know this truth, this truth of God’s grace for us simply because His Son died and lives again. Amen.