

A Widow's Story
The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC
Rev. Jennifer Gingras
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1 Kings 17:8-24; Luke 4:24-26

His God told him I could feed him. His God sent him to me.

Me! A woman with nothing. A mother convinced her next meal would be her last. A widow, expecting to die of starvation.

Some choice his God made.

What was I supposed to do? I had no bread! And pitiful little flour and oil to make any more. I've never been so hungry in all my life.

But how terrible to have to tell a stranger that you can't feed them. Never, ever in my life did I have to turn my back on a stranger in need and say no.

I spent my life welcoming strangers and feeding anyone who came to my door. But then a drought killed the crops, first my husband and then my child became sick with fever. And once my man died our small store of grain and oil dwindled down to almost nothing.

Come to think of it, I didn't say no, exactly.

No, I couldn't bring myself to be quite that direct.

What's that you say? What does hospitality matter when you're about to die of starvation?

Well; it mattered a lot to me! And I wasn't about to let my last act on earth be a refusal to look after this wanderer.

Was I about to die in shame as well as in hunger?

So I told him I was going home to use the last of my flour and oil for my child and myself. I thought he would understand, maybe say some word of release or blessing from his God. Instead he said I should bake for him first, then for me and my child! Clearly, he was hallucinating.

I laughed until I almost cried, but then it got even worse. He made wild claims that my oil and flour would never run out until the rains came.

Was he already so hungry he was losing his mind? The poor soul.

Who was I to argue with a madman? I just nodded and went home. That day, I felt like I was in a daze, going through the motions, pour the flour, pour the oil, knead the dough, all the time watching and praying.

What would it matter to have endless bread, what would it matter to see this stranger fed, if I was to be left alone to fend for myself on this earth?

I wondered if his God heard me, or if his God was cruel.

His wild claims came true, we had food enough, I still don't know how. I was astounded and grateful beyond words. But just as all seemed well, my child began to slip away.

Why? Why give me hope then rip it away? Why not let us die together in hunger but at least in peace? Why send a stranger to my door who brings such trouble?

Yet he shared my agony, this man. He questioned his God...No, no, he screamed at his God. I heard him.

For some reason, this man cared about my child, not merely his own empty stomach.

He made no more wild claims of miracles; he just stayed by my child and cried to his God. I could not bear to be in the room. When the crying stopped, it felt like my heart did too.

I waited for him to come down and tell me what I dreaded to hear.

But then I heard another cry. Weak, but familiar and calling for me!

My dearest child! Was this man a prophet then? A man of God, surely!

He laughed and said that his God had saved him from starving by sending wild birds with food, so it was not so hard to trust me!

He trusted me. Trusted. Me.

Strange, indeed, the things that give us faith.