Eating together Week 9: The miracle of God’s provision. 1 Kings Chapter 17.

After confronting King Ahab and Queen Jezebel many times, God sent Elijah to hide in a ravine east of the river Jordan, where God provided a brook for him to drink out of, and directed ravens (v4) to bring him bread and meat, morning and evening (v6).

When the brook dried up (v7), God told him to go to Zarephath, because He had directed a widow to give him food (v9). Elijah met the widow and asked her to give him a drink and bread (v10-11). However, the widow stated she only had a handful of flour and a small amount of oil, and she had planned to use this to make a final meal for herself and her son before they died (v13), presumably from starvation.

*What I have often wondered is why did God send Elijah to one of the poorest and most destitute families who were obviously on the edge of starvation and death. Why didn’t He direct him to a family or baker who had plenty of food? Why ask the person who had only enough for a final tiny meal?*

Elijah responded by telling the widow not to be afraid, but requested that before she made the final meal for herself and her son, she should make a small loaf for him (v13), and he stated that God had told him that she would not run out of flour or oil until the rain returned (14). She did as Elijah had requested, and discovered that the flour and oil did not run out, and she was able to keep on making bread for Elijah and her son every day (v15), thus avoiding starvation.

*Elijah must have sensed her desperation, as he told her not to be afraid and told her that God would provide for her and her son. Was she motivated to make Elijah food because she believed Elijah’s God would provide for her, or was she obedient because she felt she’d got nothing to lose as she was on the edge of starvation and death, so giving away her last meal would make no difference? I personally don’t think her motivations mattered. I think her act of obedience was what counted, and this caused God to bless her. This turned out not to be the last meal she was to have with her son before they died, but the first of many simple meals of bread that they shared with their new lodger Elijah (v19). The Bible doesn’t say how long Elijah stayed at the family’s house, but it does indicate that the drought lasted for 3 years (Chapter 18 v1). God provided flour and oil for all this time. This is a long time to be sharing a simple meal of bread.*

The story doesn’t end there. Some time later, the widow’s son died (v17). The mother was distraught, and blamed her son’s death on Elijah (v18). Elijah took the child from her into the room where he was staying, and cried out to God blaming Him for causing the child to die (v20), and imploring Him to bring him back to life (v21). The Bible says that God heard Elijah and gave the boy his life back (v22). Elijah gave the mother her son and said “Look, your son is alive!” (v23). The mother responded saying “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.” (v24).

*Elijah was a prophet, a man of God, yet he was angry with God and blamed Him for the child’s death. His emotions and response to God were raw and honest. I’m not sure I could respond in an angry and blameful way, as I would be fearful of causing the wrath of God to occur. Yet God didn’t respond by striking Elijah dead, but responded in love by bringing the boy to life. This act of God finally caused the widow to truly believe in the word of God which Elijah spoke.*