

A God of Abundance

[The widow] 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 (1 Kings 17:15-16).

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:8-16

Song: “God Will Take Care of You”

Amazing ideas for cake sculptures become reality at Duff Goldman’s Charm City Cakes in Baltimore, Maryland. Goldman, a judge for several of Food Network’s baking championships, makes cake-baking look like an Olympic sport. During each new television season, less-experienced contestants go through large amounts of flour, oil, and sugar in their efforts to make desserts worthy of Goldman’s approval.

By contrast, the widow of Zarephath was extremely short on supplies to bake what she needed to feed herself and her son. She was at the end of her resources when Elijah asked her for some bread. At first she responded in despair, but at the prophet’s assurance that the Lord would take care of her, she took a step of faith and witnessed God’s miraculous provision.

When things seem dire and we can’t see a way out of our predicament, we have a God who is able to provide for us in unexpected ways. Like the widow, we will find Him faithful as we trust Him, even when we can’t see the next step.

Father, thank You for meeting my needs. I’ll trust You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

April 22–28. **Sarah Cole** lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and enjoys shopping at thrift stores and taking road trips.

God Rescues Us

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?” (1 Kings 17:17-18).

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:17-24

Song: “Breath of Heaven”

My parents died four years apart from pulmonary fibrosis, a debilitating lung disease that, without a lung transplant, has a grim prognosis. They were too old to qualify for transplants, but they had great attitudes. As I watched them struggle to breathe, their suffering brought tears to my eyes, but their faith reminded me that when they breathed their last, they would be in the presence of Jesus.

When the widow of Zarephath’s son died, she had no such assurance for him. In response to her sorrow, Elijah petitioned God three times to resurrect her son. God heard Elijah’s cry, and to the widow’s amazement, her son started breathing again. She responded by exclaiming that Elijah was indeed a man of God.

When we go through the valley of the shadow of death, our faith is often on shaky ground. But God cares about our grief and sorrow. In fact, Jesus has carried these for us (Isaiah 53:4). When we turn to Him in faith, He can turn transform our most painful losses into miraculous reminders of His goodness and grace.

Father, thank You for reminding me that even when it seems impossible or hopeless, You are able to reveal Your goodness to me.

A Warm Welcome

“Truly I tell you,” [Jesus] continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown” (Luke 4:24).

Scripture: Luke 4:24-30

Song: “Beloved, Let Us Love One Another”

Each September, I return to my hometown of Wayzata, Minnesota, to attend James J. Hill Days, a weekend festival named after a famous railroad tycoon. The festival includes dachshund races, live music, food trucks, and talent competitions. But aside from all the fanfare, my visit isn't complete unless I catch up with my old friends at our favorite coffee shop. It's nice to know that I will always be welcome when I return home.

When Jesus returned to *His* hometown of Nazareth, the people there were skeptical. Despite Jesus' growing reputation as a result of His remarkable teaching and amazing miracles, His former neighbors could see Him only as the carpenter's son. They didn't accept Jesus' ministry, so He departed without doing many miracles (Matthew 13:58). The offense they took at Jesus' claims and the hostility they showed toward Him revealed the pride in their hearts. As a result, they failed to receive the blessings God had for them (Mark 6:1-5).

Our preconceived notions about people we used to know can keep us from truly knowing them and even, perhaps, from treating them as we ought to (Colossians 3:12-14). Rather than drawing premature conclusions about others, we can look for and celebrate God's work in their lives where we see it, and we can remember to hold them prayerfully in our hearts.

Father, You know everything about me, and You love me still. Help me see others through the lens of Your love. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Divine Shelter

You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings (Psalm 61:3-4).

Scripture: Psalm 61

Song: “You Give Me Shelter”

Experienced campers can tell you that a good tarp over your tent is essential for keeping dry during a heavy rainstorm; it prevents moisture from seeping through the tent walls. Sadly, my first camping experience this past summer felt like a disaster after a damaged tarp didn't do the job and my tent became flooded. I woke up with my clothes and sleeping bag soaked. Tired, cold, and frustrated, I sought shelter and a hot cup of coffee at the local diner.

In today's passage, David is overwhelmed as he cries out to God. Countless times before, God sheltered David and rescued him, and David learned that protection from his enemies and help in times of adversity come from the one who is far greater than him.

When we face obstacles, adversity, and hardship—the storms that inevitably come in life—we are often tempted to seek refuge in what the world seems to offer and to put our trust in the resources we find around us rather than turning to God as our source. However, like David, we can call on our Heavenly Father this very moment. In Him we find the all the strength and shelter we could ever need (Psalm 147:10-11).

Father, You are my refuge and shelter during challenging times. I will call on You and find rest in Your presence today. In Jesus' name, amen.

God Never Fails

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God (Psalm 20:7).

Scripture: Psalm 20

Song: “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

Centuries ago, gladiators fought to the death in Rome’s Colosseum in front of thousands of spectators. Still, charioteers and their teams of horses exceeded the gladiators in popularity. At the Circus Maximus arena, between the Aventine and Palatine hills, chariots raced around the 2,000-foot track at speeds of over 40 miles per hour, kicking up dirt as they navigated hairpin turns. Considered more lethal than NASCAR crashes, chariot crashes were common, and many men lost their lives.

King David knew the danger of trusting in the world for security. Horses and chariots, while daunting forces in battle, couldn’t compare to God’s power and might. David found refuge in God, who made his plans succeed (Psalm 20:4); gave him victory (v. 6); and answered his calls for help (v. 1). And even as a skilled warrior, David put his trust in the character and name of God because he saw the downfall of those who trusted in anything else (v. 8).

When we’re tempted to look to the world for the solutions to life’s problems, we do well to remember that everything and everyone but God will eventually fail us. He is our refuge and strength, “an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1), and no need is too great for His care. So let’s confidently approach His throne of grace for the help we need (Hebrews 4:16).

Father, I’m grateful that I can look to and depend on You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Getting What We Want

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God (James 4:1-2).

Scripture: James 4:1-10

Song: "Only Jesus"

Siblings battle it out over things that adults may consider trivial: the best slice of pie, whose turn it is to do a particular chore, or access to car keys. Heated arguments may erupt that exasperate even the most patient parents. But with good parenting skills, kids learn that they aren't the center of the universe and that everyone's needs matter.

In today's passage, James addresses a problem in the church: some were allowing their desires to rule their emotions and reactions, resulting in bitter exchanges. James used the words "so you kill" (James 4:2) to describe the essence of what was coming out of their hearts toward one another (Matthew 5:21-22). He reminded them that instead of lashing out, they should ask God to meet their needs.

Allowing our desires to rule our responses produces sinful behavior, but because we belong to Christ, there is hope. As we bring our desires to Him, His Spirit will deal with our hearts. By His Spirit we can live, not to gratify our desires, but to look to the Lord for what we truly need.

Father, thank You for this reminder that I don't have to fight with others to get what I need. I trust You to take care of me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Everyone Is Welcome

[The Canaanite woman replied to Jesus,] “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table” (Matthew 15:27).

Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28

Song: “There’s Always a Place at the Table”

My love for dogs started in kindergarten, when my parents brought home my six-week-old dachshund, Sherman, from the breeder. After Sherman, I had a few other dogs. And then after a cocker spaniel named Gigi died, I started fostering dogs. The night I brought home a beagle puppy, Rory, from the shelter, his brown eyes and delightful personality melted my heart. And while I prepared dinner each night, he waited eagerly, his tail wagging, for food to fall from the table.

When the Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter, He did not answer her right away. However, she did not give up hope. When Jesus explained His mission to her, she gave a wise and humble reply—that even the dogs of a household receive food from their master’s table. In response, Jesus commended her faith and set her daughter free.

All who come humbly in faith to Christ are welcome in His kingdom. His mission to redeem Israel would culminate in an invitation to Jews and Gentiles alike. Although as believers we come from different backgrounds, our faith in Him unites us. And everyone is valuable, invited to come to Him and be set free.

Father, thank You for welcoming me into Your family. Open my eyes and ears to those around me who are seeking You. In Jesus’ name, amen.