**Sunday 29th January 2023: 1 Kings 17: 8-16**

*8 Then the word of the Lord came to him [Elijah]: 9 “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” 10 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?” 11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”*

*12 “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.”*

*13 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. 14 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.’”*

*15 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. 16 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.*

**Notes**

It’s tempting to think the Bible has nothing to say about the cost of living crisis we find ourselves in. We hear that it’s caused by Covid, by the global recession, the war in Ukraine and other such things and we can be misled into seeing it as a 21st century phenomenon.

But if we substitute the phrase “cost of living crisis” with words such as “famine”, or “no rain in Israel”, we start to realise that actually the Bible has quite a lot of insights and accounts of how people have reacted and responded in the most severe of financial difficulties.

The famine described in 1 Kings 17 was severe, and the widow, with no social security benefits to call on, or food banks to visit, was sitting down for her very last meal.

It’s intriguing to note that earlier in the passage, in verse 10, God says “he had directed the widow to provide food for Elijah”. God himself obviously knew what he was going to do, though it seems, in a pattern we see time and time again through the Bible, he hadn’t actually told the widow herself. So we don’t see her springing smartly to attention when Elijah appears and saying “Aha, you’re the prophet, I’ve been expecting you.”

And yet, she was prepared to give from the very little, and the very last, of what she had. And Elijah it seems, was not too embarrassed to ask her. Was he unaware of this woman’s desperate financial circumstances? It seems unlikely. Somehow, gently, humbly, yet firmly, he had invited this woman to give. And she had said “yes”.

**End**