

Message Joël 01/02/2026

Text 2 Kings 4 v1 -7

This story is one of those that some of us have heard since our childhood in Sunday school, and which has something familiar about it. Familiar and yet very distant from us in time, of course...

But this feeling of familiarity and “déjà vu” can have the disadvantage of diminishing the sense of wonder we feel when reading stories whose message is extremely rich and profoundly **relevant**, especially on a spiritual level! Yes, these stories from the Old Testament which still challenge us with the same force, and invite us to “re-read” our daily lives in the 21st century, not forgetting that the God who sovereignly directed these past situations is the same God who sovereignly directs the individual journey of each and every one of us!

And if we accept this reading of the text, we will never cease to be surprised and touched by the encouraging testimonies they give us... So, in the story of this widow threatened with the worst, what stands out, of course, is God's wonderful intervention... a miraculous intervention that we would like to see more often (!!)... here a discreet intervention, hidden from view, but **extraordinary!!** If we wanted to give this episode a title, we could say:

1- “WHEN GOD'S EXTRAORDINARY INTERVENE IN THE ORDINARY OF OUR LIVES!”

And one of the first messages to take away from this story is that God acts by coming himself to us, in our ordinary daily lives, and he is always ready to respond to our most personal and intimate needs. We may sometimes believe that in order to see God's action in our lives, we must necessarily meet certain “criteria,” we must “put ourselves in the right condition,” such as creating a favorable context through fasting and prayer, for example. Of course, fasting and prayer have meaning; Jesus speaks of them in a very specific context, but he is far from making them a general rule, and he does not suggest that God's interventions are “subject” to our actions! And without wanting to be provocative, I would like to say: God always knows what to do and how to do it, without us needing to dictate a “protocol” to him! So, there are a hundred ways to approach this story, with all its symbolic aspects...

But I suggest we focus on one aspect that I find stimulating: the way in which God responds to this woman's expectation by calling her to **participate** in the response herself! And therefore on the place that personal commitment and effort take in the realization of God's miracle. And what we can note first of all in the attitude of our widow, in addition to the fact that she knocks on the right door by addressing Elisha, is the **simplicity** and **sobriety** of her approach:

2- A SIMPLE EXPOSITION OF THE SITUATION

There is indeed something to be emphasized in the way this widow explains her problem to the prophet. Her situation is dire: her husband has just died, she is left with a debt she cannot pay, and she can only look forward to seeing her two sons, the only treasures she has left, taken away by her creditor to pay off the debt through their labor, for as long as it takes! But she shares this situation with Elisha in the most sober manner possible, despite everything. She does not exaggerate to elicit pity, she does not multiply words to give “magnitude” to her drama. As she waits for Elisha's servant, she waits for God to help her, and her prayer is remarkable in its simplicity, and I would even say in its “restraint.” She expresses it without “suggesting” the solution herself, as we sometimes do! She makes no demands and has no expectations! She sincerely makes her needs known, she lets her heart speak. She trusts, she knows that there will be an answer, even if she cannot see a way out at the moment. Nor does she conclude in her pain that the trial is a punishment for her: she is not inspired by bitterness or a sense of injustice, but by **faith, courage**, and the will to overcome! But Elisha's response is first and foremost a question:

3- “WHAT DO YOU HAVE AT YOUR DISPOSAL?”

When Elisha says to her, “Tell me what you have in your house,” it is not out of simple curiosity or to save time. He already knows, he has already received instructions from God. He acts as a wise servant of God, with logic: he begins by assessing the situation, he takes stock of the resources that are available, but... it's even more than that! Even more than material resources, it is the disposition of this woman's heart that Elisha is preparing, as he prepares the answer! There will be a miracle, but it is essential that she realize one thing: that God will not perform the miracle without her. A miracle, yes, but not without her active participation. A miracle, in her case, not to rely on God and watch passively, but to act **with Him!** God's miracles are not free shows for our entertainment; they can also be **paths that He opens** before us! When God opened the sea before His people after they left Egypt, it was so that they could set out and cross without delay!

When he led Gideon and his three hundred men to victory, he did so by involving them fully in that victory, and even though they had only jars, torches, and trumpets in their hands, it was **with them** and with these meager means that God scattered the army of the Midianites!

And in the Gospels, Jesus also began by asking his disciples, “What do you have in your hands to feed this crowd?” And here too, Jesus will start with almost nothing, five loaves and two fish, a child's picnic, to generously meet the needs of thousands of people. Elisha wants to make this poor widow realize that all is not lost, that in her destitution, in her extreme poverty, she still has **something** that God can use! The important thing is that she does not give up, that she does not feel sorry for herself, but that she brings what she has, **the little she has**, so that **God can use it**! Perhaps we need to hear this invitation again to constantly relearn **the lesson of our poverty**, when we are tempted to despair. This invitation to reconsider what we have “in our hands,” those small resources that seem insignificant to us, but which we simply need to entrust to God, who can multiply them! The widow in this story did not have much trouble taking stock of her personal resources: she had only a small jar of oil left. But above all, she kept hope alive and agreed, without yet seeing the answer, to make the effort that was asked of her. Because the next step for her would indeed be an **effort to be made**.

And here is a question for us: do I accept that God really takes control of my life? Do I leave the initiative entirely to Him and am I ready to **do everything** He asks of me? Isn't there sometimes a fear that if I let God take the reins... it might take me far away... to a place I might not want to go? In short, **AM I READY TO ENTRUST MY FATE INTO THE HANDS OF GOD**, without reservation and in all areas? In any case, that is what this woman does, and the effort she is willing to make is fueled by an **absolutely exemplary faith**!

4- THE VALUE OF EFFORT

It is quite surprising that she carries out what Elisha asks of her without the slightest hesitation! “**She did as he told her**”... quite simply! And without even asking a single question! I believe that we should not minimize this woman's courage and effort! Because we must face the facts: it cannot have been that easy for her. When she went to borrow a whole series of jars, she must have had to face neighbors who were perhaps not all eager to do her a favor. She may have encountered reluctance, indifference, and she may even have been met with mockery in some houses. She was a widow and in debt, with no resources to cope, so what was she going to do with all these empty vessels? What was she dreaming of, and had she not lost her mind a little? But she accepted this task,

the only thing Elisha asked of her, and she set about it as conscientiously as possible!

As Christians, I believe that we need to remember the place of **effort** in our lives. We often rightly remind ourselves that we should not **rely** on our efforts, that we should not put our **trust** in our efforts... but that does not eliminate the reality and necessity of effort! So effort, not as something that God would credit to our account and that would be meritorious... nor as a more or less heavy burden to bear ...but as God's invitation to us to **work with him** for our happiness and for his glory! God offers us the opportunity to work with him in the fulfillment of his work; he engages us as servants, allowing us to be actors, or workers, in his plan. The widow in our story saw God working in the privacy of her home, with her sons, away from prying or mocking eyes. But she only saw it **after** she had done her part, after she had done what the prophet had asked her to do! She had to go and then pour the oil into the vessels herself, one after the other, with patience... The result for her was **abundance**! It was a response far beyond what she could have imagined. It was complete freedom regained after she had paid her debt, and the happiness of being able to continue living with her sons by her side, in contemplation of God's generosity! But all this came after she had gone through the trial of persevering effort, which does not necessarily come with guarantees in advance, and which requires accepting to walk toward **the unknown**!

Conclusion:

So, the conclusion I would like to leave with young people (and all those who feel young!) is that Christian life is also made up of effort, resolutions to keep, perseverance... That effort is a necessary part of any service... So let us not neglect any of these small efforts that God asks of us so that our hearts may be **filled with his love** and so that this love may fill the lives of others! Let us hasten to put into action even the smallest means at our disposal to serve him! Because the end result of effort and perseverance in service will always be **joy**!

And then, for the elders, I would especially like to leave them with some encouragement this morning! Encouragement in the knowledge that God has not forgotten all the efforts that have been made up to today, even if in your eyes they are far from perfect. In the knowledge that God, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews says, “**is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have shown for his name in the services you have rendered and are still rendering...**”

And that all together, young and old, we join our efforts so that our lamps, each fueled by **the oil of His Spirit**, may illuminate many around us and warm the hearts of all who see us living!

