

Once upon a time, two women were talking. One friend confided in the other, "Last night my husband and I had an argument. We got angry at each other and we had a huge fight."

"Oh, I am so sorry to hear that," her friend said. "How did it end up?"

"How did it end up? I actually crawled on my hands and knees before him," she said.

"Oh, no, why did you do that? What was he doing?"

"I told him, 'get out from under that bed you coward.'"

I like that story. That man must have been pretty discouraged. What do you do when you are discouraged? Do you hide under a bed?

In all honesty, there are times when I want to, because life can be pretty discouraging. In our scripture for today, we meet people who are discouraged. If we are open to it, we can actually learn some important lessons from them.

Before I get to that, let me remind you of what we are doing. We are in the midst of a sermon series called *Living for Others: The Importance of Mission*. Last week we started talking about Living for Others by recognizing that when we partner with God, we can make a difference in this world. Today, we are going to talk about doing what we can, in living for others.

The back drop for our scripture for today is a drought which has led to a famine in the land. Elijah has been living off the land, and the water in the place he has been living, has dried up. He is instructed to go to a foreign city, Zarephath and there he will meet a widow, who will help him. So he goes.

The widow that he meets is almost out of food. In fact, when Elijah meets her, she is gathering wood for the last meal that she has for herself and for her son. Then she expects to die and starve to death. She has simply resigned herself to death and the end of a future for her and for her child.

Can you feel the discouragement? Can you hear the sadness? What would you do?

We live in a world right now where there are a lot of people who are discouraged. There are many reasons they are discouraged. It can be concern over the economy, and the high prices of gas, food, and other basic necessities. It can be a concern over the health of a family member. It can be frustration and grief over the sadness of the death of a loved one. There are a lot of people who are discouraged.

So what can we do when discouragement overwhelms us or people we care about? **One of the first things this passage reminds us is that even when we can't see into the future, God can and God is willing to provide for us.** When Elijah meets the widow, she is so discouraged. But Elijah asks her to take a chance and trust him and God. So that if she prepares bread for him and brings him water, her supplies will never run out, until they can be replenished by the rain.

Do you remember what the woman does?

That's right. She takes a chance to trust in God for a future she cannot see or envision.

One of the hardest things about this past year for me has been living into a future that I had never before envisioned. Living with one of my children dead. Whitney had been so full of life, so full

of fun, so full of spunk. Then to know that my son is incarcerated for doing this. I would have never imagined that one family member of mine would do this to another family member.

Now I have learned a lot in this past year. But Whitney's death was and is devastating for me. There have been days when I have been deeply discouraged and even overwhelmed. Yet what I am discovering is that God is there for me, even willing to care for me and provide for me.

The invitation is for me to take a chance and trust God for a future that I had never before envisioned. I am still working on this. But I am discovering God to be faithful and present to help me. If you find yourself discouraged by life, are you willing to trust God for a new future that you had not envisioned?

**The second important lesson of this passage for me is that I believe God really does want us to lean on each other.** Elijah, the widow and her son, leaned on each other to make it through a tough time. I am sure they brought mutual benefit to each other and to their relationship. In doing what each could, they helped each other through a tough time. Are you willing to do what you can, to help those around you through challenging times?

Sometimes, this will mean taking time to listen carefully to another who is hurting. Sometimes it will mean doing something like mowing a lawn, cleaning out a basement or garage, having a cup of coffee, saying an encouraging word, offering a prayer. Are you willing to do what you can to make a difference for those who are hurting in this world?

Many years ago, there was a country-western song titled, "Roses for Mama". It's Mother's Day, and a man goes to the florist shop to buy his mother a bouquet. He knows that he should visit his mother, but he has more exciting plans so he decides to send her

flowers instead. At the florist shop the man encounters a little boy who wants to buy some roses for his mother, but he doesn't have enough money. So the man gives the boy some money, then buys his mother's bouquet.

As the man drives away from the florist shop, he happens to pass by a cemetery. Glancing at the cemetery he sees the little boy kneeling at a grave, a bouquet of roses in his hand. The man pulls into the cemetery and asks the boy what he is doing. The boy explains that his mother has been dead a year, and that he comes there all the time to talk to her and, on this special day, to give her flowers.

The man turns around and drives back to the florist. There he asks the florist if his mother's flowers have been delivered yet. When the florist tells him no, the man tells him to cancel the delivery. He wants to deliver them himself.

The man in the song understood that sometimes we just need to connect with each other. Sometimes we need to do what we can to touch others around us.

I believe that God has given us to each other in this world. It is to figure out a way to help us through the challenges we may face. It doesn't matter whether those challenges are caused by tough economic times, or tough personal experiences.

You and I are called to trust God for our future, and to do what we can, to help each other through the challenges of life. Are you willing to do what you can to make a difference for God?

May God help us be faithful.

Amen.