

# The Spirit of Sacrifice and Service

by Annie Poonen

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*This sermon reflects on the story of the widow in 1 Kings 17, emphasizing themes of unselfishness, sacrifice, obedience, and faith. It draws parallels to other biblical figures like Esther, the boy with the loaves and fishes, and the challenges faced by God's chosen people. The message encourages trust in God's provision, readiness to serve others, and the importance of standing firm in faith during difficult times.*

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 17:8, Luke 4:26, 2 Samuel 24:24, Esther 4:14, Jeremiah 12:5, Jeremiah 17:7, Jeremiah 29:11, Psalms 86:11, Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 13:5

**Topics:** "Faith in God's Provision", "Unselfish Service"

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## Description

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## Transcript

In these days when so many things are happening in the world around us, first of all the pandemic and then these fires one place to another and then the smoke and all the things that our children have to cope with, we don't know how to console them and comfort them and what word we can give except the word that the Lord is with us and he'll take care of us. So at such times I look back to incidents in the Old Testament and in the Bible days when things the difficult days came to God's people and recently I was meditating on the days of Elijah the prophet, we know what happened. During that time Elijah, God sent him to tell Ahab that there won't be rain till God sends rain.

He didn't know but it was actually three and a half years but he said till I tell you there won't be rain and then God told him to told Elijah to go and camp near a brook called Cherith and the ravens would feed him. Can you imagine a prophet of God waiting morning and evening for the ravens to bring him some bread and some meat. Then God told him go to a place called Zarephath in Sidon and there a widow will take care of you and I was thinking especially of speaking about that widow, how God used her.

I thought of it as more because Jesus referred to it in Luke chapter 4 verse 26. Jesus said there were so many widows there but God sent his prophet to just one widow in Sidon and he told her to take care of the prophet. Now this incident is in 1st Kings chapter 17, the first few verses is about this widow.

So Elijah obeyed God and he went to and God told him I have commanded a widow to take care of you. So God had already, we don't know in which way that widow would have heard God's voice but God just told Elijah you go there and that widow will take care of him. So he went there and he asked her, he saw a woman picking up some sticks and he went and asked her can you get me a little water to drink.

Now remember it was a day of drought, there was hardly any water even. So she was going to get the water and he said by the way can you get me a little bread to eat with the water. And then she said you know to tell you the truth I don't have, I just have enough flour to make a little bread, my last meal for me and my son and I'm gathering the sticks to cook that food and that will be a last meal before we die.

That's what she told and then he said don't worry, fear not, just go and make the bread and there will be enough for you. First make for me a bread. I thought how selfish a prophet would be, first make for me and then make for yourself and your son and then but he said fear not that flour which you have and the oil that you have will not finish till the drought is over.

But she didn't know, I don't know when exactly that miracle took place but she went to make that bread. But that was the word, the comfort which Elijah gave, fear not, till the time the Lord sends rain your flour and your oil won't finish. And she went and made and gave him and she and her son ate.

I was wondering what was it that, why did God choose that widow? Just like Jesus said there were so many widows but there was only this one widow that God had chosen. Then God must have seen something in that widow that he chose her to take care of her prophet and she didn't know it was a prophet. Maybe she knew, maybe she didn't but God knew.

There were some things in her which come out, which spoke to me. From this incident I learned that she must have been a very unselfish woman because as soon as Elijah said go and make that, she immediately went to make that bread. She could have answered and said look there's only little, let me take care of my son.

Why should I take care of you, a grown-up man? Let me at least make for my son. She didn't think of, give any excuses. She just went and that unselfishness spoke to me.

She must have been a unselfish person and how is it with us? Do we think of our comfort zone first or our family or our children when God speaks to us? That really spoke to me. You know the same word came to me when we started having meetings in our home, when CFC started and there were few people meeting in our home and sometimes on Sundays people would come from far off places. They take a bus early morning, maybe they wouldn't have had breakfast or packed some breakfast and they take buses, one or two buses and come to our CFC which had just started to our church meeting and the Lord gave a burden in my heart to make some food for them, keep at least some bread for them to eat as soon as they came.

If they felt like eating they could have had a little pot of tea. If they wanted they could have that and then I'd make some rice and some dal and some vegetables so that they wouldn't have to go hungry and you know for me it was not poverty but it was like the trouble I had because I had small children or my youngest son was still on diapers so I had small children at home and no I think my youngest son wasn't born yet. I had the small children to take care of and their needs and I couldn't make the time to make lunch for indefinite number of people.

Sometimes there'd be 10, sometimes there'd be two or three but I wanted to make something and keep it ready before the meeting started and then there were so many thoughts going on in my mind. Will I be able to make it? I want to give a nourishing food for my children. I can't spend all my time cooking this meal and we don't have help as we have here in western countries.

So then the Lord gave me this this sentence. My grace is sufficient for you. Whatever you have will not finish as long as you have need of it there'll be enough flour or oil or whatever you need you'll have plenty.

Just take care of my servants, my children who are coming there and I used to repeat that almost every Sunday the cruise of the bar the barrel of flour and the cruise of oil will not finish. I used to repeat that to myself when I was making that lunch for God's people and it was such an enriching experience for me and to teach my children not to think of their comfort but to think of God's people who are coming to hear God's word. That's why this widow story means a lot to me that she must have been such an unselfish person because she didn't know when the next meal where she would go for the next meal where there's no husband nobody to take care of her problem or her needs and she willingly unselfishly went to make that bread.

The second thing which I see about her is that spirit of sacrifice which I was just talking about. She doesn't matter if I don't have enough let me take care of this person she didn't know he was a prophet maybe she knew but that spirit of sacrifice and that reminds me of a verse in 2nd Samuel verse 24 chapter 24 verse 24 we all know that where David told said these words I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing. You can read about it that's not my main theme but you can read about it how David made that commitment he didn't want to get anything free from anyone he wanted to pay and he wanted to offer God something which cost him something and that also was something I is something which we see in this lady's life that spirit of sacrifice and third I can see is that obedience as soon as Elijah told her she went immediately to make that no hesitation and that obedience and willingness to serve was that were the things that qualified her to take this task and to such an extent that Jesus would talk about her and say that God chose a woman hidden woman to take care of his prophet and when Jesus when Jesus praises someone it's worth it if Jesus were to praise someone I have not found faith like this anywhere I have not seen this I have not seen submission like this it's worth being in that category and here this widow woman came into that category and she was chosen to take care of this prophet and that also reminded me of that was the test which was put before her she didn't know it was a test God was putting before her when Elijah asked for the for the bread but that was a test which she had to pass it reminded me of Rebecca you know when Abraham sent a servant to look for a bride for his son Isaac the Eliza the servant he prayed he said Lord there are so many people how will I know who's the girl who's going to who deserves to marry my master's son and he said who I'll ask this whoever comes I'll ask her can you give me a little water to drink and if that girl says I'll give for you and for your camels then she's the one and Rebecca passed the test she said I'll not sir I'll give you not just for you but for your camels and we know how much of water camels thirsty camels who walked long distance in the desert need she drew water enough for them and and Eliza knew this is the one whom God has chosen another person I can think of is Esther Queen Esther if you read about her she was chosen to be the queen and then all the Jews got into trouble there was a law passed that all the Jews should be killed and Esther's uncle Mordecai came and told her these words and said you have to take a stand for our people maybe we'll all perish but God has chosen you at this time if you don't take this responsibility maybe God will choose to someone else but this is I want to read that verse in in Esther and then we can it's beautiful word Esther chapter 4 verse 14 if thou or it's in from King James version if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time then shall there be they shall

shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place that means somebody else God will choose to deliver Jews but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this who knows whether God has put us in the kingdom for such a time as this dear sisters to do a great work for God for our families God may choose somebody else but he has chosen us for a fantastic work to live a life of faith in these difficult days and he has brought us for such a time as this so that always comes to my mind God has chosen us for in this case in this time for a great work and let us be faithful then another person I was thinking of whom God chose was you know in the time of the feeding of the 5000 when a little boy had five loaves and two fishes now we know that usually little boys don't carry a lunch box with them somebody must have told him look you have a long day ahead take some lunch with you and I have a feeling it must have been his mom or a sister or someone who packed that lunch for him and also who taught him unselfishness because when they were looking for anybody who had bread he had his lunch with him and he was taught by someone must be from his parent or from his sister share your lunch with others and God chose that boy to bless 5000 people and God told 5000 men but Jesus didn't tell the disciples must have thought whether this would be enough but God just told Jesus just told the disciples just keep giving up just keep giving out there will be plenty and that's a challenge just like it came to this widow woman just keep serving God will supply your need and that's what we the lesson that we learn don't be anxious about anything my grace is sufficient for you God's grace is sufficient for us and um in another verse which helps me help me at this time is that everything will work together for our good all things work together for our good for whom for those who love God not for everybody those if we make it a point that we love God more than anybody and we desire God more than anybody else then everything will work together for our good and what a wonderful experience this would poor widow had first of all her material needs were met her earthly need she had enough food till the time of the drought was over there was enough food for her and her family she she saw that miracle taking place that this flour which was needed was never getting finished and she had enough to feed her family and to the prophet who was living there and then the second miracle she saw was her when her son God tested her her son got sick and and he died and she thought God was punishing her but there was a purpose in that she came and told Elijah my son has died and we know the rest of the story how the Elijah took him to his upper room and prayed he not just once he prayed three times that's why when we ask the Lord for something don't stop praying keep on asking till God answers that prayer in some way either it's yes or no but in most cases he'll say yes I'll answer your prayer for you and he prayed and the son was brought back to life see she experienced another miracle not only her earthly need was met but her son was brought back to life and it was like a greater and greater testing but greater miracles taking place in her life that's why when we obey the Lord in one step he leads us to greater steps when we can trust God and the third was that she came to believe that Elijah was a true prophet and the word that he spoke was the word of God that's what we read it later on in in the same chapter he said now I know that you have God's word and God's word is in your mouth and and that's how it is when we obey the Lord and it reminded me of another verse which comes in I was reading recently in in Jeremiah chapter 12 in Jeremiah chapter 12 I read this verse five if you have run with footmen and they have wearied you wearied you how can you contend with horses that means if we are just running with people and we are getting tired God will bring us to a situation we have to run with horses and he's preparing us these trials that we face now these testings that we face now are only a testing and a preparation for the coming days maybe greater trials will come and if just running with footmen as we already does how will we be able to run with horses so the Lord is preparing us in small testings like this just like he prepared the widow first it was her food then second it was her son dying but she had faith the Lord is preparing us for maybe greater trials will come to us definitely in times of tribulation we have to

stand and here in the next few verses it says if in the land of peace you're wearied how will you be in the swelling of Jordan that means if the Jordan River overflows is more testing comes how will you be able to cope with it now we are living in land of peace times of peace things are not so difficult even if there is pandemic things are under control whatever problems we face but there might be trials and testings which come and we we should be God is preparing us for the trials which are going to come in the coming days dear sisters we have to come closer to the Lord and cry out to God and read his word abide in him so that we'll be able to stand when the trials get stronger when the fire gets hotter and when the when things which we have to go through are more difficult and if we are fainting at this time how can we strengthen our children we need to comfort our children we're not always going to be with our children they'll have to face things when we are not near them but they see yeah my mom had faith when she went through these trials and she had this or she had faith she wasn't giving up she used to get up and she used to take care of us and that could be a challenge to our children and that's the inheritance we can give our children and there's another verse which in in Jeremiah which also blessed me we all know that those verses in Jeremiah chapter 17 it says blessed is the man Jeremiah 17 verse 5 to 8 cursed is the man that trusted in man and make it flesh his arm and whose strength whose heart departed from the Lord that means we are not depending on God but we are depending on some earthly measure some earthly comfort or somebody to lean back on of course God provides our needs through earthly means but if our trust is only the earthly comfort and all and the provision on earth then there won't be any blessing there'll be a curse but blessed is the man who trusted in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord's the Lord is for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters that spreadeth out her roots by the river and shall not see when heat comes but her leaf shall be green and shall not be careful in the year of drought neither shall cease from yielding fruit just like like this woman in the time of drought God met her need when we are trusting in the Lord whatever drought or hardships come there'll always be freshness in our life there'll be fruit which will bless others our leaves will be green and fresh because we are planted by the river where there's deeps from deep within we are drawing a the nourishment which comes from God is not any earthly nourishment people can't understand how can she be so fresh and so triumphant when she's going through so much of hardship and poverty and drought and nobody to help her there's a secret there's a secret spring the Lord is giving her comfort and sustenance that is our testimony dear sisters in times of hardship times when our husbands are having problem in their jobs or they have to work harder because they're working from home or whatever problems we face sickness or our children are not able to cope with their studies with doing the zoom you know this technology and they're not able to focus on looking at the computer all the time whatever it is God has given us that freshness because our roots are connected with the Lord and we are getting sap and freshness from him and people can't explain but there is that reality and we know that we are not going to be afraid when the coming days of testings come we are going to stand firm because we are not going to stand because by our own strength our strength comes from God we are going to stand firm and we'll be more than conquerors praise God for that and that that's what this miracle of this the which this widow faced spoke to me so much and said you'll be willing to pour out your life and we have a life of sacrifice and spirit of sacrifice and we'll be willing to serve others just be willing and God will take care of everything else she didn't have to work hard to get the flour for the next meal or next meal she didn't even have to worry God just kept supplying her and it may not be in earthly things but definitely in whatever I need is God will keep on supplying I need I want to share another precious word which God gave me in these days in Jeremiah now you know that I'm reading Jeremiah these days so I got a lot of blessing from verses in Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29 verses 11 to 14 I read these wonderful words the Lord says I know the plans I have for you now we make so many plans I'll go here I'll do this I'll have this I have this but the Lord says I know the plans I have for you they are plans for good not for evil to give you a

future and a hope in those days when you pray I will listen you will find me when you seek me if you look for me in earnest that's all what we have to do we have to look for him in earnest and seek him then I will be found by you and I will end your slavery whatever our defeat is we may be having some um defeated in some area in our spiritual life or our earthly life our anger or whatever it is um lack of faith in God whatever it is God will end that slavery I hear we will be found he will be found by us and he will meet our need whatever plan we may make just submit it to the and say Lord your plan is the less is the best for me and just today I read this wonderful verse Psalm 86 verses 11 to 13 in the this is the living Bible tell me where you want me to go and I will go there may every fiber of my being unite in reverence to your name with all my heart I will praise you I'll give glory to your name forever you love me so much you are constantly so kind you have rescued me from deepest hell that's like a commitment I said Lord you love me so much you have rescued me I will give glory to your name because you love you're constantly loving me with every fiber of my heart I want to reverence your name I want to live for you I want to go where you want me to go I don't want to go anywhere else but where you want me to go I will go recently my brother with whom I talk very often he sent me a song a video song but one sentence he keeps reminding me and that's one sentence in that song where God Jesus is telling me what matters to you matters to me that means matters to Jesus if anything hurts me it affects him it matters him to him whatever I have on my heart as a burden he knows about it and he's carrying that burden it's such a comfort dear sisters what matters to it may be trivial things concerning our children our health or our husbands or our jobs anything big or small it's um if it matters to us if it's weighing on our heart it matters to God what a precious comfort it is it matters to Jesus and he's there with us all the time to take care in the old testament this widow could only have a fraction earthly blessing but in the new covenant we have so much more we have Jesus with us his holy spirit dwelling in our heart and Jesus with us and all the precious promises he's given us we can hold on to that and he will never leave us nor forsake us he'll hold us by our right hand and he'll lead us we thank God for such precious precious promises he's given us let us keep on trusting him every situation that we go through let us not give way to despair or unbelief whatever we have to face let us hold on to the Lord Lord my trust is in you my confidence confidence is in you you are not going to forsake me just like our husbands and our families have not forsaken us God won't forsake much more the Lord will take care of us praise and thank God and we don't have any fear and whatever our earthly need will be met spiritual need will be met praise God dear sisters God bless you

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